This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Catalogues
1910
600021975U

THE

CHRISTMAS STORY-TELLER

LONDON:
ROBSON AND SONS, PRINTERS, PANCRAS ROAD, N.W

[illegible] BY SIR JOHN GILBERT.] [p. 611.

COUSIN GEOFFREY'S CHAMBER.

CHRISTMAS STORY BOOK

THE

CHRISTMAS STORY-TELLER

A Medley for the Festive Season

OF

TURKEY AND MINCE-PIE; PANTOMIME AND PLUM-PUDDING;
SMILES, TEARS, AND FROLIC;
MUMMERS, GHOSTS, AND CHRISTMAS-TREES

BY

OLD HANDS AND NEW ONES

FIFTY-SEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON
CROWN BUILDINGS, 188 FLEET STREET
1877
[*All rights reserved*]

251. e. 882.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
ASKING A BLESSING	1
I. THE CONCERT.	
II. CHRISTMAS-EVE.	
III. ON EARTH PEACE.	
WHAT CAME OF KILLING A RICH UNCLE ONE CHRISTMAS TIME. By Mark Lemon	21
A COAT WITH A FUR LINING. By Mark Lemon	42
THE SMALL HOUSE OVER THE WATER. By Mark Lemon	58
MR. DAWBARN. By T. W. Robertson	89
THE LADY OF LALEHAM FERRY. By Edmund Yates	112
THE CHRISTMAS SAMARITAN. By Astley H. Baldwin	127
WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED LAST CHRISTMAS. The Last Story written by Mark Lemon	129
HOW I LOST MY WHISKERS	158
MERRY GAMES FOR CHRISTMAS TIME	169
CHRISTMAS THE AVENGER!	186
COUSIN GEOFFREY'S CHAMBER. By Hon. Mrs. Henry Clifford	187
DID I OFFEND? By Henry S. Leigh	214
THREE REMARKABLE CHRISTMAS-DAYS	215
CHRISTMAS SMILES AND CHRISTMAS TEARS, OR THE STORY OF THE PANTALOON'S DAUGHTER. By Andrew Halliday	225
CHRISTMAS AT SUNNYMEADE HALL, OR COUNTRY COUSINS AT HOME	245
THE CHRISTMAS ROSE. By Alexander H. Grant	269
HOW ONE GHOST WAS LAID. By Shirley Brooks	272

PAGE

My Christmas Piece. By Andrew Halliday . . . 296
Burglaries, Past and Present. By Frederick Arnold . 313
The Magic Pitcher. By J. Ashby-Sterry. . . . 328
A Nice Mince-pie, or the Merry Maids of Middlesex . 332
Christmas in the Streets 354
Mummers and Drolls: a Gossip about Pantomimes, Old and New. 358
The Ghost of Lawford Hall: a true Story. By Walter Thornbury 383
A Debt of Honour: a Ghost Story. By Sir Charles L. Young, Bart. 396
What I saw after eating my Christmas Pudding: a Dyspeptic Vision; not a Poem. By Alfred Crowquill 420
Full Fathom Five. By Tom Hood 423
Suggestions for a Christmas-day Costume . . . 440
A Christmas-tree Party 441
A Shy Man's Difficulties. By Percy Fitzgerald . . 456
Time works Wonders. By F. C. Burnand . . . 479
I. How the Wedding was settled.
II. How the Bridegroom didn't come up to Time.
III. What Karrabosso saw.
IV. The Talisman!
V. What happened then.
VI. How Midnight ended the Day.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

	ARTIST	PAGE
COUSIN GEOFFREY'S CHAMBER . .	*Sir John Gilbert, R.A.*	*Frontispiece*
WHAT CAME OF KILLING A RICH UNCLE ONE CHRISTMAS TIME . . .	*Charles S. Keene* .	33
MR. STUDDEN'S INTERVIEW WITH THE BANKER	*J. Mahony* . .	89
THE CHRISTMAS SAMARITAN . .	*M. Ellen Edwards* .	127
HOW I LOST MY WHISKERS . .	*Charles S. Keene* .	166
CHRISTMAS THE AVENGER ! . .	*J. Gordon Thompson*	186
DID I OFFEND ?	*Wilfrid Lawson* .	214
CHRISTMAS AT SUNNYMEADE HALL .	*C. W. Cope, R.A.* .	258
THE CHRISTMAS ROSE . . .	*Winterhalter* . .	269
READING MY CHRISTMAS PIECE . .	*W. M'Connell* .	308
THE MAGIC PITCHER . . .	*Alfred Crowquill* .	328
A POLICEMAN'S VIEW OF CHRISTMAS .	*G. H. Thomas* .	356
THE GHOST OF LAWFORD HALL . .	*J. A. Pasquier* .	390
WHAT I SAW AFTER EATING MY CHRISTMAS PUDDING	*Alfred Crowquill* .	420
SUGGESTIONS FOR A CHRISTMAS-DAY COSTUME	*Linley Sambourne* .	440
A SHY MAN'S DIFFICULTIES . .	*C. A. Doyle* . .	460

With Forty-one other Illustrations interspersed in the Text.

THE

CHRISTMAS STORY-TELLER.

ASKING A BLESSING.

I.

THE CONCERT.

THIS is to be a story with a moral to it. It is to be a story from which it is hoped young readers (and even old ones too) will pick out a warning and a timely caution for the Christmas season which is nigh at hand. It is to tell how careful you ought to be whom you ask to

170

dinner. It is to tell how even a game of 'trencher' may involve much more weighty forfeits than smelling-bottles, bracelets, keys, and pocket-handkerchiefs. It is to tell of serious losses, and how the losers bore up under them: how the most ordinary village of this county lost its standing quarrel, lost its pet subject of gossip, lost its party watchwords: how two highly respectable families lost their daughters: how two amiable young ladies lost their good names (for if Stanhope and Bertram are not good names, I should like to know what good names are): how two young gentlemen of irreproachable character lost their liberty: and how all four of these young people actually lost their hearts.

To begin, then, at the beginning. It all came about in this way,—the beginning being no further back than one week before Christmas 1860, and the place where it began (and indeed where it has ended too, for that matter) being Woodfield in Warwickshire.

Woodfield in Warwickshire, I observe, is not noted on the Ordnance map with that distinctness which is desirable for geographical purposes. Indeed, so far as my examination has gone, it does not seem to be noted at all. But as I am not responsible for the accuracy of the Ordnance maps I can give no explanation of the omission. I can only say that if Woodfield is *not* in Warwickshire, then perhaps I shall be told next that I am not, as I suppose myself to be, *in Woodfield* at the present moment, and, in that case, I shall feel extremely obliged to any gentleman connected with the Ordnance Survey Department who will inform me precisely where I am. In the mean time, however, and until I am corrected on competent authority, I shall agree with the other seven hundred and ninety-nine inhabitants of this parish in considering ourselves to be living in Woodfield.

And I am sure that no one of these seven hundred ninety and nine will think me superficial in fixing the

above-mentioned date for the commencement of this narrative. One and all of them will approve my judgment in declining to preface my story with any account of the years of family quarrelling which had gone before that time. Indeed, they would no more wish me to do so, than they would wish me to trace back the loves and hatreds of Stanhopes and Bertrams, who were buried generations before my Stanhopes and my Bertrams came into this burying-place at all. For it was, and is, well understood in Woodfield (where everybody knows everybody else's business, and interests himself mightily in it too) that these families were at variance, and had been at variance as long as the place had held them. It was taken for granted, in fact, that this was the preordained relationship of Stanhopes and Bertrams, and in speaking of them it would have been thought as unnecessary to allude to it, as to explain that there was a serious want of concord between Wellington and Napoleon when they met at Waterloo; or that the houses of Montague and Capulet were on anything but tea-drinking terms with each other.

It is true that the retainers of the houses of Stanhope and Bertram did not go biting their thumbs at each other in the street, and the young bucks of those families did not openly thrash each other with their canes. It is true, indeed, that the one was hardly ever known to say an uncivil thing of the other. But it is not the less true, also, that no one in Woodfield would have dreamed of inviting a Stanhope to meet a Bertram, any more than of asking the old surgeon to dine with the new one, or the rector to sup with a Baptist minister. A Stanhope would have preferred to die of his own doctor rather than be cured by the Bertram doctor. A Bertram would have gone without sugar in her tea for a fortnight before she would have sent to the grocer who supplied the Stanhopes. There had been, it was said, originally, some litigation about estate boundaries between the two families, from

which litigation no one had gained any advantage except the family lawyers. There had been old struggles for precedence, which, the two households being really 'both alike in dignity,' had only ended in their ranking side by side in all county assemblies, and on all justices' benches. It is true there had been no active outbreak for so many years, that the heads of the two families might have found it hard to say what were the exact causes of difference between themselves; yet not the less was the old antagonism still recognised: not the less was the ancient fire known only to slumber, as Vesuvius slumbers sometimes for a month, sometimes for a year, sometimes for a century, but infallibly breaks out again at last: and not the less was Woodfield, in its little way, divided into the factions of Stanhope and Bertram. In this state things had been as far back as the memory of Giles Driveller extended, and Giles was supposed to be some years older than the parish register. In this state all the parish were persuaded things must remain as long as Stanhopes and Bertrams

unusual demand for tickets, so that on the Tuesday night there was a prospect of the national schoolroom being crammed, and it was rumoured that the sale of tickets was stopped.

But I ought to explain, before going any further, that these concerts are given every year by the rector and his personal friends. The only aid they have is that of the village choir and other strictly parishional talent. It was wont to be one of the few occasions in the year in which the village factions forgot that they were factions, and could only be recognised as such by their excessive politeness to each other. Both platform and schoolroom were admittedly neutral ground. The two principal artistes were year by year Miss Aimée Stanhope and Miss Grace Bertram (I call them by their Christian names because I like them, though properly their titles were Miss Stanhope and Miss Bertram), and these two young ladies usually joined in a solemn duet on the grand piano, after which they solemnly curtsied to each other, and did not know each other any more for the twelve months to follow. It was confessed, however, by everybody, that these concerts were but frigid dull affairs, and it was not until the very day of the performance that any one hoped that either the programme of that particular year, or its effect, would vary much from those of previous years. But on the Wednesday morning certain printed slips, to serve as supplementary programmes, were circulated through the village. In these it was announced that Mr. Percy Fairholt had been induced, first, to take part with Miss Stanhope in the duet of 'Home to our Mountains,' and then in the second part of the performances to join Miss Bertram in a second duet of 'What are the wild waves saying?' On this addition to the programme becoming known, a final rush was made (my authority is still the rector) by those who had not yet secured places, and all of them had the satisfaction of finding that rumour was false in declaring the issue of

tickets to be stopped. Whether securing a ticket was equivalent to securing a place certainly did not seem quite so clear.

Undoubtedly the room was crowded, and undoubtedly the concert went off with unprecedented *éclat*. From the very tuning of the instruments to the last strains of the National Anthem, our enthusiasm went on increasing. Indeed to the tuning itself the audience listened with exemplary patience as to a sort of voluntary before the regular service. And if any one actually mistook it for a part of the concert he was excusable. The respective performers on violoncello, violin, harp, flute, and trombone, diddle-diddled, twanged, bum-bummed, and tootle-tooed against each other, as if their very lives depended upon their success in showing first how incredibly their instruments were out of tune, and then how wonderfully they could bring them into tune. When at last they all left off at once with a flourish, and stood ready for the opening crash from Meyerbeer, they were rewarded with a round of applause which got hands and feet into good order for subsequent work.

If afterwards we erred at all, I am inclined to think it was in beginning our encores too early; for after we had encored the rector in 'Kathleen Mavourneen' it would have seemed invidious not to encore the curate in 'Once I loved a maiden fair.' And after having encored both these performers it was evident that if we failed to encore the clerk in 'Wait for the Wagon' he would put it down to our sense of his inferior social position, and we should hurt his feelings accordingly. The result was that having once begun we had to encore everything. We even encored Mr. Wingwood Bertram's solo on the trombone, which really I did consider to be stretching the quality of courtesy to an immoderate degree.

But the great successes of the evening were undoubtedly the two duets with cousin Percy. The way in

which he knelt, as Manrico, to Miss Aimée, as Azucena, and sang 'Rest thee, O mother,' was exquisite, and everybody declared it could not be surpassed, until, as little Paul Dombey, he, and Miss Grace, as Florence, fairly made our enthusiasm boil over, and brought us in great excitement on to our feet to join in 'God save the Queen,' and to find with surprise that it was actually half-past eleven o'clock. Late as it was, however, no one was at all impatient to be off. Our selections, as will have been noticed, were not at all *recherchés*, and we had, for the most part, carefully eschewed classical music. Perhaps it is therefore that the weaker and more diluted qualities of music can be taken without ill effects in much larger quantities than the highly concentrated harmonies of more fashionable concert-rooms. At any rate I suppose I am not the only one who has gone away from a half-guinea concert feeling that we really had received *too much* for our money; while here we only dispersed as if we should have liked to remain an hour longer.

Never was bonneting, cloaking, and leave-taking in the clear, sharp, frosty air gone through so deliberately and so cheerily as that night. The brisk impatient pawing of the horses (taking it not near so easily as we, and still chafing at the repeated encores) scarcely hurried us at all. It had indeed a lively pleasant sound with it, in keeping with our mood, and we chatted in groups at the door like old acquaintances, while they were grinding the icy earth beneath their hoofs, swinging their manes, jerking the reins, and expressing in every way that is known to horses their sense of the impropriety of our conduct.

How long we might have stayed it is impossible to say, had not coachman Jacob, as it happened, been my aunt's special favourite, and a servant whom she regarded as a valuable property—not on any account to be overworked or put out of temper. When, therefore, he had for the third time turned his head sharply round, pretending that

he had heard some one call out 'All right!' my aunt said to the locality in general, 'Where can they be?' and to me in particular, 'Do find them—it's a shame!' meaning, of course, that it was a shame to be keeping Jacob out; which Jacob overhearing, he at once blew his fingers vigorously, and made signs of being frozen to the very marrow.

Fortunately there was no need for me to leave my seat, for at this moment my uncle and Percy reappeared. So my aunt, for at least the twentieth time, said to Mrs. Stanhope, whose carriage was standing side by side with ours, 'We shall expect you all then on Christmas-eve?' Percy and my uncle at once added their entreaties to the invitation. The Stanhopes bowed and smiled assent. Jacob was determined to wait no longer, and off we drove.

Our ears and the ears of the Stanhopes, however, were not the only ears that had heard the invitation and its acceptance. It was currently known that very night in Woodfield that the Fairholts were of the party of the Stanhopes.

II.

CHRISTMAS-EVE.

MRS. HENRY FAIRHOLT was a lady who had for many years persistently assumed that it was impossible either for her husband or any one else in his senses to have opinions different from her own. This assumption had very naturally led to another—that inasmuch as her husband's opinions (of necessity) coincided with hers, it was not needful for him to have opinions at all. My uncle, I am sorry to say, was usually willing enough to have the trouble of thinking taken off his hands. As for Mr. Percy, whatever opinions he might have, he was seldom at the

trouble of expressing them, or of contradicting those of his mother. My aunt therefore had long held the reins of government in our family, and merely required us all to acquiesce in what she thought, and do what she wished. Nor could we complain that she exercised her sway tyrannically, or acted, for the most part, otherwise than as a sensible good-hearted woman should act. The evil was that, though my uncle was seldom guilty of thinking for himself, he would persist from time to time in acting on his own responsibility without thinking at all, and without asking his spouse to think for him.

On our coming to Woodfield some four or five weeks before Christmas, my aunt had resolved to get over the trouble of acquaintance-making as quickly and as easily as possible. Contenting herself therefore with a few formal introductions from the rector, she had conceived the bold idea of giving a dinner on Christmas-eve to such of the neighbouring families as she thought eligible, and as she wished to know. I call it a bold idea, because the charms of home are generally so strong on that particular night that it needs at least an old acquaintanceship to induce people to leave their own firesides. My aunt, however, had worded her invitations naïvely, saying that she 'feared she was almost asking too much, but that she threw herself on the clemency of Mr. and Mrs. So and So, and trusted they would consider the loneliness of a stranger, and do her the honour,' &c. &c. Thus her proffered hospitality had been accepted by so many that we were likely to have our house well filled.

I need hardly say that she had not been many days in Woodfield before she had made herself fully acquainted with all that was known of the feud of the Stanhopes and Bertrams. She had been formally introduced to both these families, and she had distributed her invitations almost equally between their respective adherents. (For it is to be understood that the Stanhope-Bertram politics

never ran so high in Woodfield as to prevent the followings of the respective houses from feasting together whenever occasion offered.) But she had left it to this night of the concert to decide whether it should be the Stanhopes or the Bertrams whom she asked to join us on Christmas-eve. Chance had made her sit next the Stanhopes, and she had invited them.

My uncle, however, was not nearly so well versed in the Stanhope-Bertram question. If he had heard of any family quarrel at all he had certainly never bestowed any thought on it. He was not a quarrelling man himself, and could never have been made to think—good easy soul—that other people were seriously in earnest in disliking each other even with good occasion; much less could he have realised the existence of hostile feeling on grounds that had become quite traditional. So, when Percy escorted Miss Grace Bertram to her carriage, my uncle, leaving my aunt with the Stanhopes, stepped across with him to have five minutes' confidential talk with old Mr. Bertram on the merits of shorthorns and mangolds. And as Mr. Bertram's voice, like my uncle's, seemed to come huskily from beneath many dinners, perhaps it was that which suggested to my uncle the idea of pressing him to come and put one more dinner on the top of it at Woodfield Manor on Christmas-eve. Thus, while my aunt was receiving the promises of the Stanhopes that they would join in our festivity, my uncle had got from Mr. Bertram an assurance that he also would come, and bring with him Mrs. Bertram, Miss Grace, and his son Mr. Wingwood.

And at our breakfast next morning all this came out.

'I wish, Emily,' said my aunt to me, 'that you would write notes to the Stanhopes, to remind them of their promise to come up on Christmas-eve.'

'And she might as well write to the Bertrams too,' said my uncle, 'if so much fuss is necessary.'

'Impossible!' exclaimed my aunt; 'why, the Stanhopes have never been under the same house-roof with the Bertrams in their lives.'

'Time they were, then; and, at any rate, Mr. Bertram promised me last night that they would all come.'

I declare my aunt turned quite pale with dismay. 'But you never,' she said—'you never told him that the Stanhopes were coming! If you must ask him at all, why didn't you tell him that?'

'Because, my dear,' said he—'because I never knew, and because I thought—'

'Thought!' said she—'you thought! and a very pretty business you have made of your thinking. We shall have a fight in the dining-room, a scene in the drawing-room, and a paragraph in the county newspapers!'

My uncle whistled the tune of the 'Cannibal Islands,' as he always does when storms are imminent, and he had got at least half a dozen times through it before my aunt had cooled down far enough to admit, as she did at last, that there was now nothing for it but sending both the sets of notes, and leaving the result to fortune and good management.

Our only hope was that one or other of the belligerents would hear that both were invited, and would send an excuse for staying away. But Monday came, and no such way out of the dilemma opened to us. In fact the secret seemed to be with us. Every one knew that the Stanhopes were coming, but no one had named it to the Bertrams; and the Bertrams, for their part, did not seem to have spoken of their intended visit to any one.

The only one who seemed to enjoy the prospect of the coming encounter was Percy. He and I were busy as bees all Monday decorating the house with holly and laurel. He had got a mistletoe of such an immense size that he declared that the apple-tree must have grown *on it*, as it could never have grown on any apple-tree. He was

in positive alarm lest any *dénouement* should take place to keep away either Miss Grace or Miss Aimée, for he declared he meant to go through his duets again with them. In short, he was the only one who made light of our perplexity.

As for my aunt, when dinner-time drew near, I believe she would have been glad of any accident, short of burning the house down, by which dinner might have been destroyed and she furnished with a decent excuse for countermanding her invitations. Every dish, however, was done to a turn. Every gravy, every sauce, every jelly, every pudding was perfect. Everything, in fact, went provokingly well. Then the guests themselves began to arrive. The Stanhopes came early; and my aunt said to me, it really made matters worse to see them so good-tempered and so thoroughly agreeable. 'They will be so different by and by,' she said; 'it seems quite a pity. If only they had been a little bit cold and disagreeable to commence with, you see they would not seem to have so far to fall.'

But the Stanhopes evidently seemed as if they would not make themselves unpleasant to oblige anybody. Then came the Mertons, and the Fletchers, friends of theirs, all brimming over with goodwill and Christmas feeling. Then came the Emerys, the Falconers, and the Pattiesons, all seeming as if they tried to look more cheerful than those who had come before them. And last of all, simultaneously with an overpowering odour of roast turkey and sausages, in came my uncle with all four of the Bertrams, whom he introduced with one grand flourish to all the guests at once, led them to the top of the table, and before either they or the Stanhopes had become at all alive to their position, these respectable families found themselves seated face to face, one on the right hand and the other on the left of their host.

Dinner had been pronounced to be 'servi' that minute.

For one instant a flush passed over the faces of the two men, who had hardly ever met before, or ever thought of each other but with the stinging sense of ancient grudge. In an instant they instinctively pushed back their chairs and rose to their feet. Their families rose with them. Before a word could be spoken, my uncle rose too, and my aunt rose at the other end of the table. Every guest rose to his feet and leaned forward that he might catch the angry words that were expected. With admirable presence of mind my uncle stretched out his hand and motioned for silence. Then he said solemnly, 'O Lord, who givest us all good gifts in due season, add thy blessing to these mercies, and help us to partake of them with love to thee and love to each other, in remembrance of that Saviour who was born at Christmas time.' And we all sat down as if we had risen merely to ask this blessing, and we breathed with a sense of sudden relief, and my uncle said, 'What shall I help you to, Mr. Stanhope?' And Mr. Stanhope took, if I remember rightly, a little of the wing, with a small slice of the breast. And Mr. Bertram took whatever selection he thought best, and so indeed did all of us. And my uncle took wine with Mr. Stanhope (for we are yet old-fashioned enough in Woodfield to take wine with each other). And he took wine with Mr. Bertram. And I am afraid I must confess that he took wine severally with every one at the table. And then he took wine with Mr. Stanhope and Mr. Bertram conjointly, in a triangular way, and then with the whole table in an aggregate capacity, and, in short, everybody took wine with everybody else, and before dinner was over, Mr. Bertram and Mr. Stanhope had been seen actually to jingle glasses with each other across the table. Mr. Wingwood Bertram had said to Mr. Mark Stanhope (a young gentleman whom I have not yet introduced to you, because he is of no consequence), 'Come then, let's shake hands on it;' and had shaken hands with him across

the table so often that at last he had abbreviated the invitation to 'Come—,' which Mark (that is, Mr. Mark) always understood as a request for the loan of his hand, and that he would drink wine with Mr. Wingwood. I even fancy that I saw Miss Grace and Miss Aimée nodding to each other, and sipping at least a full teaspoonful of sherry apiece: but I should be sorry to make this assertion positively without some other confirmation.

At any rate, before dinner was over, everybody seemed to feel that without a word of explanation the great Stanhope-Bertram feud had ceased to exist, and that matters were henceforth to stand on a very different footing between the two families. I think, therefore, that the blessing which Sancho Panza invoked upon 'the man who first invented sleep,' is due also to the man who first invented dinners, whereby are often, as in this instance, covered a multitude of offences, and many virtues brought to light that lay invisible.

In fact, when we ladies came in again from the drawing-room to make tea, it seemed to me that Mr. Stanhope and Mr. Bertram had discovered so many virtues in each other that you would have taken them for the most attached friends in the room.

Tea, I need hardly say, was but a brief affair, for Percy had been tormenting me in a most abominable way to hurry on the games which were to follow it. It was evident, in fact, that he had been conspiring to put the old people into the background, and let us young folks monopolise the rest of the evening.

To begin with, we tried charades, our first attempt being to perform a mystery in three acts, which, being interpreted, was to signify the word co-nun-drum. In the first act Percy was the managing partner of a puffing shop in the haberdashery line, and in conversation with other acting partners he enlarged on the fact that he was in *co* with them. The idea was certainly not a brilliant

one, but it is surprising how the most hopeless dulness is pardoned amongst good-humoured people. At any rate this was liberally allowed to pass muster as a symbolical representation of the first syllable of our word. Then in act the second, Percy again came in as a father confessor investing Miss Grace Bertram with the veil, and there was much talk of the fair nun and of the mistake she was making. Here again none of us knew that our ceremony was in the slightest degree like the real ceremony which we travestied; but as none of the lookers-on were wise enough to correct us, we passed muster again. But when the inevitable Mr. Percy, in act the third, came in once more with a drum at the head of what he called a regiment, public opinion could tolerate him no longer; and as everybody had been talking openly of our word from the beginning of the second act, we drummed out the drummer himself with many indignities, and pronounced charades to be intolerably stupid. It remained a joke, however, for the rest of the evening, that Percy maintained his position as father confessor to Miss Grace long after the drama ought to have been finished.

After charades Mrs. Bertram proposed 'proverbs,' as an amusement peculiarly suited to young people of such limited understandings as ours evidently were. And after we had tried a proverb, we had 'How, when, and where?' and after that some one proposed the still more imbecile employment of loving our loves with all the letters of the alphabet, whereupon the young gentlemen, who had been for some time showing signs of mutiny, broke into open revolt, declaring that it was so long since they were babies, that they had entirely forgotten their alphabets; that it was a shame to expect any one to play such games so long after he had put away his primer; and that, in short, unless they had something with forfeits in it, they did not see what was the use of the mistletoe, and they had better begin dancing at once.

In this way, I blush to confess, we were persuaded, without much resistance, to commence a game at trencher, involving no end of romping and unladylike behaviour. Miss Stanhope tried the longest to maintain her dignity; but for any young lady to maintain dignity, when she is liable at every minute to be called on to prevent a spinning trencher from falling, or to leave her seat and frantically rush to that vacated by some one else, is simply impossible. Miss Stanhope gave it up at last, and played her part, as an amiable foolish creature, with the rest of us.

But I must and do say that the way in which Percy kept Miss Bertram running after that trencher, and the unfair expedients he had for preventing her from getting a chair when seats had to be changed, was most scandalous. When he called her name—and that was simply every time he had the chance of calling anybody—he never gave the trencher a fair honest spin, but merely set it on its edge, and tipped it over, so that Miss Bertram had no chance of catching it. The consequence was that in a very few minutes she had parted with her bracelets, her scent-bottle, her scissors, her thimble, her gloves, and her needle-case, and was declared to be bankrupt and out of the game until the time came for redeeming these treasures. After which it was surprising to see how Mr. Percy himself was somehow always being called on for forfeits, too, and very speedily had to be marched off to the corner where Miss Bertram had gone before, and where, I have no doubt, she told him her mind very freely.

They were not left to their quarrels long, however, before, my aunt's work-basket being full of forfeits, it was decided that we should begin to redeem them. So Miss Stanhope was appointed to serve them out, and Mr. Wingwood Bertram was blindfolded and placed on his knees before her to decree the penances which had to be

gone through in each instance for the release of the properties.

And certainly, to see Mr. Wingwood on his knees before Miss Stanhope, with his face nestled in her lap, and to see the way in which Miss Stanhope boxed his ears when she found that he had got a peephole for one eye, and that on the strength of information thus fraudulently gained he was proposing to redeem one of his own forfeits by taking her under the mistletoe,—to see this, I say, must have been a sight to astonish their parents. And to see how Mr. Wingwood's only idea of redeeming a forfeit was, that he should set some one to take a liberty with some one else; and to hear what a preposterous amount Percy said there was to pay on a letter which he pretended to bring from Miss Bertram, and the wrangling which they had outside the door (for the postman was never admitted into the room) about the 'change' which he said he had to give her; then to see the pitiful face of Mr. Wingwood when a letter which Miss Stanhope had brought for him was declared to be prepaid, and how he persisted in giving her 'change' out of nothing,—to see and to hear all this was a caution to all respectable parents not to let their children play trencher again on light provocation.

It came to an end at last, however, and a call was raised to clear the room for a dance. Then in came Jacob, the coachman, who combines a knowledge of fiddling with a knowledge of horseflesh, and with him as sole orchestra we devoted ourselves to reels, and polkas, schottisches, lancers, and mazurkas, till human legs could trip it no longer, save in one grand old country dance, on which we expended all the energy we had left. My aunt and uncle were top couple; then came Mr. Stanhope and Mrs. Bertram; then Mr. Bertram and Mrs. Stanhope; then we young people, as seemed good to us. There were twenty couples at the least, although my talk in this

story has been only of a few. And all of us were determined to show ourselves people who could dance, and did dance, without any pretence in the matter. And when it was all over, we were content to hear people talk of going home, without being indignant at the suggestion; and so, with friendly shakings of the hand, and happy laughter, our friends departed, and left us to our own bright yule-logs and our own well-pleased thoughts.

III.

ON EARTH PEACE.

WHY should I lengthen out a closing tale? You all know pretty nearly what is to follow, and could write the chapter of 'happy ever after' as well as I. There was never story-teller yet who succeeded in driving two pairs of lovers well in hand. One or other pair is always overstepping the traces, breaking bounds, becoming unmanageable, and monopolising all the driver's attention. Either he enlarges too much on the wooings and the bliss of the one to the neglect of the other pair, or by attempting too great impartiality he makes us indifferent to all of them. Why should I court failure by attempting the impossible?

I think there was hardly any one in Woodfield who did not eat his Christmas dinner the more heartily that year for knowing what had passed at Woodfield Manor on Christmas-eve. And though some few sneered, and said that the hasty healing of an old quarrel would prove but a temporary one, and that the old grudge would soon show itself again, yet no one was the worse for their sneering, and they were prophets who had no acceptance in Woodfield.

Before the new year had come, it was noticed that the Stanhopes and the Bertrams had exchanged visits twice or thrice. Before three months of the new year had gone, it was no secret that Miss Stanhope was about to become Mrs. Wingwood Bertram. Before another month had passed it was known that the day fixed for this wedding was also to change Miss Bertram into Mrs. Percy Fairholt. Miss Stanhope was wont to say that she had only accepted Mr. Wingwood to atone for having boxed his ears in public. Miss Bertram declared she would never have had Percy had she not considered herself compromised by his conduct while playing trencher. Be that as it may, it is certain that this double wedding actually took place before another Christmas had passed, and that when it took place a third wedding, in which I and Mark (the young gentleman whom I said was of no consequence) were interested, was also beginning to be talked of in rumours which have since proved correct.

Next Christmas-eve nearly the same party met at Woodfield Manor as were there the year before; and my aunt's innovation of selecting that Eve for a gathering of the neighbours is now hardly looked on as an innovation at all. That year, it is true, we had not so merry a time as the Christmas of which I have written. For our mirth was sobered, and our happiness was clouded, as was the happiness of so many homes in England, by thinking of the mysterious Providence which had seen fit to make the noblest home in the land a home of mourning at that Christmas time. But now, while I write, the hollyberries are red again. The leaves lie in the way. The wind is whistling shrill. The grass at morn is crisp with frost. Christmas is well-nigh here once more, and we are hoping it will prove a happier and a more cheerful time in cottage, and hall, and palace.

My uncle often says that he never in his life asked a blessing more earnestly than he asked it at dinner-time

that first Christmas-eve; and he thinks that never were blessings bestowed more abundantly than they have been shed on him and his since then.

A word in due season, how fit is it! May we, each of us, in all the beginnings of strife have a friend at hand to speak it, and ears to hear it!

WHAT CAME OF KILLING A RICH UNCLE ONE CHRISTMAS TIME.

BY MARK LEMON.

I.

'DANCE with me, Letty Green,' said George Poynter to a pretty girl with blue eyes, and 'hair that shamed the morn.'

Her ample ball-dress was of the purest white muslin, fastened at the sleeves and round the waist with blue ribbon—bluer than her eyes.

'Yes,' answered Letty, 'I want to dance with you.'

And the music striking up, the young couple made the most of it, to the occasional derangement of less determined terpsichoreans.

The dance at an end, Letty tried to smooth her golden curls into order with her little hands, and then, opening her pretty blue eyes to their full, said:

'George Poynter, I should like some orange.'

'Yes, Letty,' said the young gentleman addressed; 'and there's lemonade, and negus, and such a sponge-cake.'

Letty thought that sponge-cake and lemonade would be more acceptable than orange *pur et simple*, and her partner fought his way bravely through the crowd surrounding the refreshment-table, and returned with the desired delicacies.

'I like dancing with you better than any one, Letty,' said George to his pretty partner.

'Do you? Why?' replied Letty, her voice rather obstructed by the sponge-cake.

'I think it is because I like you—you are so pretty,' replied the young gallant.

'You mustn't say that, or mamma will scold you, Georgy. She scolds every one who tells me I am pretty,' said the young lady.

But the words had been spoken, and from that night until the end of the Christmas holidays, George and Letty said they were sweethearts.

II.

SOME four or five years had passed, and Letty Green and her mamma were sitting together under the verandah of their pretty cottage, working, and talking of a pleasant day they had spent at Mr. Poynter's, when Master George came, he said, to bid them good-bye, as he was returning to school on the following morning.

'And I want to ask you a favour, Mrs. Green, and Letty a favour,' said George, colouring slightly.

Mrs. Green would grant it of course, and so would Letty, if she could.

'I want Letty to ride Rufus, my pony, whilst I am at school. Papa has no use for it, and it carries a lady beautifully.'

But to accept this proposal would give so much trouble.

'Not in the least. Tom—that's our groom—says it won't, and papa says it won't, and I say the same; so please say you'll use the pony. Straps, the harness-maker, will lend a side-saddle.'

Mrs. Green accepted George's offer, as Letty was rather fragile, and pony-riding had been declared to be good for

her; but Mrs. Green's income would not allow of the expense, she said. There were people who called Mrs. Green a mean woman, and hinted that she loved money better than her child.

George Poynter went to school very cheery, because he had made such a capital arrangement about his pony, and he often thought, when the weather was fine, of Rufus, and wondered if Letty were riding him. George had not forgotten, perhaps, that years—years ago he and Letty had called themselves sweethearts.

III.

MORE years had passed, and brought their changes. George and Letty were alone together in a small book-room in Mrs. Green's house, the windows opening to the garden. George was attired in deep mourning, and there were strips of black ribbon here and there on Letty's white dress. They had been talking of death and sorrow until both had become silent. After a time Letty took George's hand, and said:

'Dear George, you must strive to meet your great affliction with a brave spirit—indeed, you must.'

'I have—I do strive,' replied George, looking away from Letty; 'but remember what has come to me. Two years ago my father died. A year ago that villain Jackson ruined my father—broke his heart—killed him. O Letty! what have I done to deserve this? What can I do?'

'Trust still to the Father of the fatherless,' replied Letty. 'We do not know why great afflictions are permitted to overtake us, any more than we can tell why great good comes to us when we least expect or deserve it, dear George. You are young, clever, good, and have many friends, and one—who is more than a friend.'

She raised George's hand to her lips when she had said this (they were true sweethearts now), and he—what

could he do but press her to his bosom, and kiss her cheek burning with blushes?

Mrs. Green had been walking in the garden, evidently busy with her thoughts. She had stopped near the book-room window, near enough to hear what the sweethearts were saying to each other, and she appeared to be made more thoughtful by what she heard.

When Mr. Poynter was a thriving merchant, Mrs. Green had been more than a consenting party to her daughter's acceptance of George Poynter's attentions—indeed, she had by several indirect means encouraged the young people to think lovingly of each other. But now matters were changed. Master George, as he was generally called, had neither houses nor lands, nor had he 'ships gone to a far countrie,' and Mrs. Green was perplexed how to act. She knew that Letty loved her first sweetheart, and would perhaps love him more now that he was poor. Girls are very perverse sometimes, and will not see with their mothers' eyes, which look upon Love only with respect when the little gentleman has a good wardrobe and a balance at his banker's. Mrs. Green therefore was perplexed when she heard what the sweethearts had said to each other, and conjectured how they were 'signing and sealing' some loving contract, when silence prevailed in the little book-room.

Mrs. Green was relieved from her perplexity more agreeably than she deserved to have been, as George Poynter called the next day, bringing with him a letter from his uncle, rich old Silas Cheeseman, promising to provide for his only sister's only son, and hinting that George might by good conduct look to be heir to all his thrifty savings.

Silas was a bachelor, having been blighted in his youth. He then took to loving money, and had been a most successful wooer, as those clever people who know everybody's business but their own declared old Silas Cheese-

man to be worth his hundred thousand pounds—'more or less, as the case might be.'

Uncle Silas had also procured a situation for George in the neighbouring town of St. Gnats—merely a probationary situation, as clerk to a timber-merchant who was under pecuniary obligations to Silas. All this was very cheering, and very kind of Uncle Silas, although Mr. Bawk, the timber-merchant, was indelicate enough to surmise that George was placed in his establishment as a spy, and to watch the interests of his uncle. George would have scorned such a position for all Uncle Silas had to give or to leave behind him.

IV.

BEFORE we pass on to the events of the next few years, we will introduce Chauncey Gibbs, a friend of George Poynter, of whom we have yet made no mention.

Chauncey—his patronym of Gibbs was rarely mentioned—Chauncey was a good-natured, good-for-nothing, unsettled, amusing fellow, who contrived to live a gipsy kind of life on 200*l.* a year, steadfastly refusing to encumber himself with any employment or to incur responsibilities more (to quote Chauncey) than his hat would cover. He was a native of St. Gnats and known to everybody in the town, but he had no regular abiding place, as he chose to wander at will; and George Poynter would not have been surprised to have received one of Chauncey's brief letters dated from London, Paris, Vienna, or Pekin. He mostly affected England, however, and London especially in the winter. When money was scarce Chauncey walked; when he was in funds he availed himself of any cheap conveyance which offered, sometimes never inquiring its destination, but making himself equally at home wherever he was stranded. At Christmas time he always returned to St. Gnats, and was a welcome guest at many hospitable tables in that thriving town, making his head-quarters, however,

with his old friend and school chum, George Poynter. He had written to announce his return to St. Gnats for the Christmas approaching the end of the two years which had intervened since George Poynter had assumed the

stool of office at Mr. Bawk's, and supplies of tobacco and bitter beer were already secured for the welcome expected guest.

Chauncey had a favourite lounge in London, a tobac-

conist's in an out-of-the-way street in the neighbourhood of St. Mary Axe.

The proprietor was a Beadle, or some official of that character, to one of the companies, and the tobacco business was conducted during the early part of the day by the Beadle's wife and daughter. It was Chauncey's pleasure to sit on a snuff-tub in front of the counter and smoke, in turn, all the varieties of tobacco sold at the Beadle's, beguiling the time, also, with animated conversations with the daughter, whose powers of repartee were more ready than refined. It is not our intention to chronicle more than Chauncey's parting interview and what came of it, as slang from a woman's lips is our abhorrence.

Chauncey was about to leave the shop after one of his long sittings, when the younger lady said:

'You won't see me again, I expect, Mr. Chauncey; I'm going to be married.'

'*You* married!' exclaimed Chauncey, as though such an event had been the most unlikely thing that could have happened.

'Yes, me; why not, I should like to know?' asked the lady, a little piqued.

'I'm sure I envy the happy man,' replied Chauncey. 'It's not the Scotchman at the shop-door, is it?'

'Well, I'm sure!' said the young lady, and without another word she bounced into the little parlour at the back of the shop.

'Now you've regularly offended Becky,' said Mrs. Beadle, 'and such old friends as you was—and she to be married to-morrow, and so respectable.'

'Well, I'm glad to hear that,' said Chauncey. 'Where's the wedding to be? I'll buy a bundle of watercresses and strew her way into church as an apology for my rudeness.'

'Oh! she won't want no apology from you—she knows what you are, Mr. Chauncey; but she's to be married at

ten to-morrow, at St. Mary Axe's, but we don't want it spoke of, as the bridegroom's nervous,' said Mrs. Beadle, in a whisper.

'I'll be there in time,' replied Chauncey. 'I suppose her father will give her away—in full costume, cocked hat, staff, and all that.'

'He will do all things that is proper, Mr. Chauncey,' said Mrs. Beadle, with much dignity; and Becky at that moment calling 'Mother!' in rather an hysterical tone, Chauncey was allowed to find his way out of the shop as he pleased.

On the following morning Chauncey was at the church of St. Mary Axe a quarter of an hour before the time appointed for the ceremony which was to unite Miss Beadle and somebody to their lives' end.

A hale old gentleman between sixty and seventy, perhaps, was the next arrival. Having made some very confidential communication to the old pew-opener, he was conducted, evidently in great trepidation, to the vestry, and there immured until the arrival of the tobacconist and family,—but without the emblematical Scotchman. Chauncey concluded, therefore, that Miss Beadle had captivated the old gentleman now awaiting his doom in the condemned cell called the Vestry.

The Beadle was in *mufti*, but his costume still partook of the splendour of his office, and a canary-coloured waistcoat with glittering buttons of ruby glass rendered him somewhat conspicuous even in the gloom of St. Mary Axe. His general expression and bearing was that of a tempered indignation, as though he were about to consent to the infliction of some injury which he could avoid if he pleased. A word, a look, might have provoked him to have torn the license from the parson's hands and to have dragged his daughter from the altar. He was therefore allowed to walk up the aisle unmolested.

Mrs. Beadle was very lively on her entrance to the

church—more lively, perhaps, than black tea and the occasion warranted; but whatever had been the stimulating cause of her cheerfulness, it ran in plenteous drops from her eyes as she approached the altar, and must have been exhausted entirely by the end of the ceremony. Niobe weeping for her children would have been a dry nurse compared with Mrs. Beadle.

Miss Beadle was resigned, as became her to be at thirty-one. With closed eyes and drooping head she leaned upon her mother's arm, until, with pardonable confusion, she released her hand to put up her parasol as she drew near the altar. Chauncey rushed to her relief, and with some difficulty possessed himself of the encumbrance; and as there were no attendant bridesmaids, the impudent fellow attached himself to the wedding party, to be, as he said, 'generally useful and to pick up the pieces.'

The ceremony proceeded with all proper solemnity, but there was some association with the name of one of the contracting parties which made Chauncey fairly start, and then determine to witness the signing of the certificate, to satisfy a doubt which had suddenly entered his mind.

The wedding party retired to the vestry when 'Amazement' had ended the ceremony, and proceeded to sign the registers attesting the union which had just been solemnised. Mr. Chauncey Gibbs being, as he said, a friend of the family, signed also, and there read—what had better be revealed in the next chapter.

V.

ANY one had only to have walked down the High-street of St. Gnats to have known that Christmas was at hand. The grocers' windows were overrunning with lusciousness; the butchers' shops were so choke full of beef and mutton that the butchers themselves would have to

cut their way out into the street; the poulterers had laid in such stocks of turkeys, geese, and chickens, that Mr. Babbage's calculating machine could alone have computed them—mere human intellect would have failed. The window frames of the houses seemed sprouting with holly and 'the ivy green,' and no doubt but mistletoe hung, kiss-provoking, within.

Mrs. Green had made every room in her cottage an anagram of her name, as it was holly-decked everywhere. Nor was the sacred bough forgotten—'on the young people's account,' she said, 'though Letty and George had long ceased to want an excuse for a kiss.' All promised a merry Christmas time to come, but promises, we know, are not always realised.

George Poynter was waiting the arrival of his friend Chauncey Gibbs. A glorious fire blazed within the grate; the table was spread to welcome the coming guest, for whose delectation a faultless rumpsteak pie was browning in the oven. The train, punctual to its time, was heard screaming into the station close by, and in a few minutes after the two friends were together.

If you are hungry it is tantalising to listen to the particulars of a dinner you are not to share; if you are sated, you are bored by the recapitulation of dainties you care not to touch, and therefore we will allow the friends to take their meal in peace. Neither will we join their after revel when two or three old cronies came in and made a night of it, until George and Chauncey sought their beds fairly tired out with jollity.

When breakfast was over the next morning, and Chauncey found that George had excused himself from attendance at the timber-yard, he said:

'I am glad you can give the morning to me, as I have some news for you that may, perhaps, surprise and annoy you.'

'Indeed!' replied George. 'What is it?'

'I would not touch upon it last night, although, I think, some immediate action should be taken by you or your friends,' continued Chauncey, looking very serious.

'Pray speak out,' said George.

'Oh yes. I must do that, for I have no tact, never had, to make an unpleasant matter agreeable. Have you heard from your uncle lately?'

'Yes, two days ago—principally on Mr. Bawk's business,' replied George.

'My old boy, your uncle never intended you any good when he shut you up in that log-house of Bawk's. He put you there for his own selfish purpose and nothing else.'

'Why do you say that?' asked George.

'He has led you to suppose that you were to be his heir some day, has he not?'

'He has never said *that* in direct terms; but he certainly has hinted at such a possibility.'

'Then he's an old scamp, if he don't deserve a harder name,' said Chauncey, thumping the table. 'Two days ago he did his best to disinherit you. You may stare, but I saw with my own eyes, heard with my own ears, that old ragamuffin marry a bouncing woman of thirty.'

'Marry! Uncle Silas marry!'

'Fast as St. Mary Axe could do it, to a snuffseller's daughter;' and then Chauncey, to the astonishment of his friend, narrated what we already know of the wedding at which Mr. Chauncey had so officiously assisted.

'This is indeed a terrible blow,' said George, 'an unexpected blow.'

'Yes; I am afraid, knowing the hands he has fallen into, that he won't have a will of his own when a few months have passed,' said Chauncey. 'I found out how the matter came about. Old Silas was very ill, and wouldn't have a doctor; but—a Beadle, I call him, got at

him, and then introduced his daughter as nurse. They first physicked him nearly to death, and then brought him round with bottled porter. They told the old fool they had saved his life, and he believed it; and out of gratitude, and the want of a nurse, he proposed to Miss High-dried, and married her.'

'This hits me harder than you know, Chauncey—much harder. Poor Letty and I can never hope now—'

'Oh, nonsense!' replied Chauncey. 'Keep your uncle's secret, as he will if he can, marry Letty, and let Mother Green storm afterwards.'

George shook his head, and then said—

'Chauncey, you advise that which is dishonourable.'

'All fair in love, old boy,' replied Chauncey, with a laugh; 'and if I were you, to gain the woman who loves me, and whom I love, I'd KILL MY UNCLE.'

'Great heaven! what do you say? But I see—you were joking. No; my course is perfectly clear so far as Mrs. Green and Letty are concerned. I go to them at once, and tell what has taken place. If I am forbidden to continue my visits by Mrs. Green she shall be obeyed. Letty, I know, will be always true to me; and when I can make a home for her, I can claim her with honour.'

'Devilish pretty speech,' said Chauncey, 'and all right, I have no doubt. I still say, kill old Silas Cheeseman, and get married: or, stay—perhaps—yes—you shall write to him, now that he's honeymoon struck—tell him you want to follow his example, and require ten thousand pounds to do it.'

'I understand this nonsense, Chauncey,' replied George, with a sad smile. 'Your friendly chaff is well meant; but my case is very serious. And so good-bye for an hour or two. You will find me here after that time.'

The road to Mrs. Green's cottage never seemed so long before to George Poynter as it did now that he felt his

[Charles S. Keene.] [p. 33.

WHAT CAME OF KILLING A RICH UNCLE ONE CHRISTMAS TIME.

fate. The happiness, for a time at least, of his darling Letty depended upon the interview he was seeking with her mother. He was not without some justification for the misgivings which beset him, as Mrs. Green had more than twice or thrice casually hinted at what a mother's course should be, to prevent a child 'marrying into poverty.' Indeed, she had once told him, when Letty was not present, how glad she was when his uncle's recognition of him produced such a favourable turn in George's fortunes, as it had spared them all the pain which she should have felt it her duty to have inflicted. The crisis had only been deferred. There were tears from Mrs. Green—regrets and pity; but there were also cold cruel words, which were not to be gainsaid, unless Letty could disobey the mother who had loved her all her life, and lived only to see her happy.

George spared his Letty and her mother any contest as to the decision to be made. He promised to obey Mrs. Green in all she required of him; but he promised Letty also, when they were left alone, that his love never should change, nor should a doubt ever have place in his thoughts that she could change one tittle in her love for him. And as he held her to his beating heart—not for the last time, no! no!—he told her how he would strive to make a home for both—that their probation would be short if a brave resolution could only find the means to work with. And they would come—they always did; for had they not been promised by the One which could not lie?

Poor hearts! they parted very sadly; but a good angel was already busying himself for their reunion. And such an angel!—Chauncey Gibbs!

'He won't write to old Silas? Then I will,' said Chauncey half aloud, when George had left him. 'He won't KILL HIS UNCLE—an old fool? Then I will.' He

opened the long blade of his penknife and—trimmed a quill which he found on George's desk.

There were paper and ink, as may be supposed, and there was also the ready-writer Chauncey, who began:

'St. Gnats, Dec. 20, 18—.

'DEAR SIR,—As my friend, Mr. George Poynter, is unfortunately suffering at this time from a severe blow in his chest—("That's perfectly true")—I have placed myself at his service; and although I shall not express myself as he would have done on the subject—("That's true again, I fancy")—I hope you will take the will for the deed. News has reached us here, dear sir—("He'll like that dear sir")—that after many years of deliberate calculation—("No, not calculation")—consideration, you have discovered that man was not made to live alone, and therefore, with a wise regard for your own happiness, you have sought connubial felicity at the altar of St. Mary Axe.—("Very good!" muttered Chauncey; "the name of the church will show that his secret is known to us.")—I know not whether it is your wish that your blissful union should be made generally known; but I cannot hesitate (on the part of my friend, I mean) to offer you my sincerest congratulations, and to wish you all the happiness you deserve.—("That's true; and I should like to add, all you are likely to find.")—I am aware that what you have done must necessarily interfere largely, if not entirely, with those expectations which you once or twice—("Shall I say promised? No")—encouraged me to entertain—("What would old George say to that?")—and though I descend from the clouds—("Good figure that")—to the substratum of daily toil and permanent anxiety, I shall know that you are sitting happy at your domestic hearth, smoking the pipe of peace—("It wants something else to round off the sentence")—and—and—("Oh, blow it!")—rocking the cradle.

'May I request—if not asking too much at this blissful period of your life—a line, to tell me that I may add to my affectionate remembrances an Aunt Cheeseman?

'I remain, dear Sir,

'Your affectionate nephew,

'For GEORGE POYNTER—'

Chauncey paused. 'It won't do to sign my name, or Mrs. C. will remember it. Yes—I have it—they never heard the name of

'C. GIBBS.'

Having sealed and directed his letter, Chauncey proceeded to post it.

In travelling down from London Chauncey had learned that a projected branch railway from St. Gnats was in high favour with all the moneyed interest of the place; and when he suggested the propriety of killing old Silas he had this railway in his mind, as on the following day the allotment of shares was to take place. Chauncey knew—as he knew everybody—Mr. Golding, the banker and chairman *pro tem.* of the projected company. Without the least misgiving or hesitation he called upon that highly respectable gentleman, and, after a few minutes' interview, gave the conversation an extraordinary twist, or jerk, as thus:

'You've heard of the great windfall to our townsman, George Poynter, I suppose,' said Chauncey. 'No? Well, perhaps it was hardly to be expected, seeing what a retiring fellow he is.'

'What is it?' asked Mr. Golding. 'He is a young man for whom I have the greatest respect. I shall be glad to hear of any good fortune to him.'

'And it is a good fortune! His uncle, you know, was immensely rich,' said Chauncey. 'The *old bachelor* is no more—went off three days ago—and my friend George was long ago his appointed heir.'

'Silas Cheeseman gone!' remarked Mr. Golding, with

a shrug: 'a very money-getting man; and must have died very rich—very rich.'

'E-nor-mously rich! Single man many years; no expenses, you know,' said Chauncey. 'I witnessed the last moments of the old bachelor at St. Mary Axe. Went off quite composedly after his will was accomplished. By the bye, it strikes me you might secure the interest of young George.'

'How, my dear sir?' asked Mr. Golding: 'we are always glad to secure a good client—'

'And with such wealth!' said Chauncey. 'You allot shares in the St. Gnats Junction to-morrow, do you not?'

'Yes,' replied the banker; 'and the applications exceed anything I ever knew; the shares will be five or six premium before to-morrow is over.'

'That's your plan, then! Secure him a thousand.'

'A thousand!' exclaimed Mr. Golding.

'Well, half a thousand—say five hundred—for George Poynter; I'll let him know whose influence he has to thank for them. You'll be the banker of his immense wealth—his friend—adviser.'

'But he has not applied,' said Mr. Golding.

'But you have. What's a paltry five hundred to you, in comparison to after gain—or to him? He won't care for the money, but the friendliness of the thing,' said Chauncey, with a flourish of the hand, as though he were proposing the merest trifle of a sacrifice.

'And you, my dear sir?' asked Mr. Golding.

'Oh, nothing; I want nothing; and you may rely upon my secrecy.'

Mr. Golding pressed Chauncey's hand, and thanked him for the friendly suggestion.

axt

Mr. Golding had but one *confidant*, Mr. B ıner, who at that moment entered the bank, and was a ounced as being there.

'Do you object to my naming the matter to my friend Baxter?—great influence at the Board,' said Golding.

'Not in the least: perhaps he may help you to make the allotment a thousand,' replied Chauncey.

'Oh, impossible, my good friend,' said the banker. 'Show in Mr. Baxter.'

Chauncey's communication having been repeated to Mr. Baxter, the diplomatist thought he had better retire; but he had not gone many yards from the bank when Mr. Baxter overtook him.

'Delighted to hear what you have told us concerning your friend Poynter—an excellent young man, and deserves all he gets.'

'I am sure of that,' said Chauncey, 'whatever good it may be.'

'He'll reside at St. Gnats, I suppose?'

'Yes,' answered Chauncey.

'And will want a house suitable to his new position?'

'Yes.'

'Now I am wanting to sell Prospect House yonder—fine garden, abundance of water, and all that,—would it suit him, do you think?'

Chauncey was rather posed by this inquiry, and said, therefore, 'Perhaps.'

'I think it would: 3500*l.* is what I ask—and could get it, but I dislike the man. You know Captain Ranger?—of course you must,' said Baxter, with emphasis.

Chauncey did not and would not know Captain Ranger.

'He is a troublesome fellow, and I should be glad if he would leave the place,' said Mr. Baxter. 'If Mr. Poynter will buy he shall have the preference.'

Chauncey saw no objection to that, and promised to speak to his friend if Mr. Baxter would make the offer in writing; but 3000*l.*, he thought, would be the utmost that Mr. Poynter would give for a house.

Mr. Baxter paused for a moment, and as they were opposite his counting-house, he invited Chauncey in, and subsequently gave him a letter to Mr. George Poynter, containing an unconditional offer of Prospect House for 3000*l.* Chauncey carefully put away the letter, and bade Mr. Baxter good-day.

Poor George had returned to his lodging when Chauncey had transacted all the important business we have recorded, and not all his friend's good spirits could rouse him from almost despondency.

'My old boy,' said Chauncey, 'you'll sink down, down, if you show the white feather in this way. You're young enough to work and like it—I never did.'

'It is not hard work—hard fighting with the world, that I am fearing; it is the effect of this day's cruel trial upon poor Letty.'

And then George told Chauncey all that had passed.

'Well, you would be so hastily honourable,' replied Chauncey; 'you had better been advised by me—waited a day or two until you had killed your uncle.'

George looked at his friend, and saw a cunning twinkle in his eye; but Chauncey had his own reasons for saying no more on the subject.

George was very ill the next morning—too ill to go to the timber-yard; so Chauncey offered to see Mr. Bawk, and, if business pressed, to supply George's place for a day or two. Mr. Bawk declined Mr. Chauncey's services, and was so excessively polite and anxious in his inquiries about Mr. George, that Chauncey thought the story of yesterday had reached Mr. Bawk.

It was not so; but Captain Ranger had been to the timber-yard to see Mr. Poynter, and had surprised Mr. Bawk by assuring him that his clerk must have come into money, as he had bought Prospect House, at a sum which he (Captain Ranger) had refused to give. He had,

however, left a commission with Mr. Bawk; and Chauncey wormed out of the timber-merchant the following particulars.

Captain Ranger, it appeared, had married a lady with money—not always a desirable exchange for a man's life—and the lady never allowed him to forget the pecuniary part of their engagement. She had taken a fancy—the word is not strong enough—a longing for Prospect House, and the Captain had undertaken to obtain it; but, being fond of a bargain, he had disgusted Mr. Baxter with a tiresome negotiation, and the house had slipped from him. To confess this to Mrs. Captain Ranger would be to invoke a conjugal tempest; and in his extremity he had come to Mr. Bawk to intercede with his clerk to transfer his purchase.

'Well,' said Chauncey, 'George is a good-natured fellow—too good-natured—and I will undertake to say that the Captain shall have Prospect House for 4000*l.*'

'Four thousand pounds!' exclaimed Mr. Bawk.

'And not one shilling less,' said Chauncey firmly. 'The house is worth it as it stands; but compute its value to Captain Ranger, and it is cheap at any money.'

Mr. Bawk pleaded to a stone agent when he tried to soften Mr. Chauncey; and Captain Ranger coming into the counting-house at the moment, heard the terms proposed, raved like a maniac for ten minutes, and then consented to be swindled—robbed, for the sake of peace and quietness.

Chauncey could be a man of business when he pleased; and he was now in a business mood. He therefore trotted off the angry Captain to an attorney's, made the transfer, and secured a prospective 1000*l.* for his friend George by KILLING HIS UNCLE.

As the day wore on, Chauncey waited upon Mr. Golding, and found that gentleman writing to Mr. Poynter, and expressing the great pleasure it gave him to hand

him a letter of allotment for 500 shares in the St. Gnats Junction, &c. &c. &c. Railway; adding a hope that the firm of Golding, Silverton, & Co. might have Mr. Poynter's name on their books as an honoured client.

Chauncey undertook to deliver the letter, and to use his influence with his friend to make the only acknowledgment he could for such disinterested generosity.

Poor George was very ill at ease when his friend Chauncey returned, and at first was disposed to be angry at what he felt to be his inconsiderate raillery.

'I am serious, old boy, quite serious,' said Chauncey, throwing Golding's letter and the transfer on the table; 'I have killed old Silas Cheeseman, and there are some of the proceeds of the transaction. Open—read and satisfy yourself.'

George opened the envelope containing the transfer, and then Mr. Golding's letter. He was in a mist. He thought he was delirious and had lost his reason; and Chauncey was a long time making him comprehend how he had come to be possessed of—

Profit on transfer	£1000
Profit on 500 Shares; premium 5 per Share	2500
Total	£3500

and all by killing old Silas Cheeseman!

Poor George was hard to satisfy that these large gains were honourably come by; and when he went to sleep he dreamt that he had robbed the bank and had set Prospect House on fire. The following morning brought a letter from Uncle Silas.

The poor old dotard expressed himself so pleased at his nephew's forgiveness of an act which he had thought would have provoked only revilings and wicked wishes, that he enclosed a cheque for 1000*l.* and his avuncular blessing.

Was ever another fortune made by such means?

George had all the money; Mr. Golding begging his retention of the shares, as his commercial acuteness might be damaged by a disclosure of the trick which had been practised upon his cupidity; and Captain Ranger was submissively satisfied, having told his *cara sposa* that he had bought Prospect House a decided bargain.

Mrs. Green would have had to endure many mortifying reflections had it not been Christmas time, when Letty and George, and all other estranged friends, are willing to forget their old grievances, and, in thankfulness that such a season was vouchsafed to erring man, humbly imitate the Great Forgiver.

A COAT WITH A FUR LINING.

BY MARK LEMON.

AT the time I was about 'walking the hospital' (St. Bartholomew's) there was a man—a City solicitor in good practice—who almost excited in me a feeling of envy by his possession of a cloth coat lined throughout with sable. In this magnificent garment he was to be seen morning

and evening during cold or chilly weather, snugly seated in the Holloway omnibus, whilst I and others rode and shivered on the knifeboard of the same vehicle, only comforted or consoled by our tobacco privileges, which, of course, did not extend to 'insides.' I had often jested with my mother—my widowed mother—about this fur coat, and declared that the thing I most desired to possess was a coat lined with fur—not with sable, of course—rabbit-skins, hare-skins, fox-skins would have been equally acceptable to me. My mother would often pause at work, and, looking me in the face, ask, 'Toby, are you serious?' And then I used to laugh and say, 'Of course'—still leaving her in doubt as to the real state of my wishes.

My father had been a prosperous man up to a few years of his death, and then, by over confidence in some speculative friends, he met with great losses. There could be no doubt but that self-reproach and regret hastened his end, and he died when he was just fifty, leaving my mother about four thousand pounds, in addition to some two hundred a year of her own. We were thus, it is true, placed above want, but this income was scant enough to educate me for the medical profession and to keep a pony-carriage, which was needful for my mother, who was lame from an accident.

We always spent Christmas week with my mother's brother, who was a widower for the second time, and having one pledge of his love — a daughter. Cousin Jenny was in my eyes perfection—I have thought otherwise in after-years, perhaps—and I fancied that she had a similar estimate of me. I was just twenty. Jenny would be seventeen on her next birthday, the 4th of June. My mother, of course, made all the preparations for our journey, and trunks and portmanteaus were ready corded and strapped in the hall. I had noticed that my mother was unusually fidgety, holding frequent private conferences with her maid, old Sally—Sally had been my nurse,

and my mother never travelled without her. In half an hour we had to leave for the station, which was just outside the town, and a fly from the George had been ordered for our conveyance; it was seen in the distance slowly coming up the street. My mother and her maid again conferred, and Sally was about to leave the house for some purpose unknown to me, when she exclaimed, 'Here it is, ma'am!' adding in the same breath, 'What a dawdling lot your people is! they don't deserve to be patronised by nobody!'

'It' proved to be a large brown parcel, which, on being opened, disclosed—O rapture of raptures!—a beautiful coat lined with curly Astracan—and for me!

'Dear mother! kind mother! foolish mother! to spend so much money on your darling son!'

But neither my mother nor old Sally would agree in this invective; and at last I became reconciled to the costly gift, when I learned that a diamond ring—never worn now by my mother—had been sacrificed for my benefit.

What a coat that was! The marrow in my bones warms at the remembrance. 'It lies full fathom five' in the Irish Channel, having been dropped overboard, three years ago, by a stupid Irish sailor. What a coat it was! It wrapped round me freely—it was not scamped in the body nor narrowed in the sleeves, but just what a fur coat should be—ample in all ways. The sensation when I put it on! The softness of the pressure! the gentle embrace of the collar, which seemed to cuddle my neck—only one arm was ever so soft—so warm! I am sometimes selfish enough to contemplate for a moment to replace my lost treasure, but my wife's shawl is three years old, and even I can see it is out of the fashion.

I was in my coat, and old Sally stood lost in admiration of the garment and its wearer. My dear mother's eyes glistened with tears as she contemplated the pleasure she

had given to her boy, and I—I could only express the gratification I received from my new acquisition by kissing the dear old faces that beamed upon me. We were *en route*—we were at the station. I was conscious, after a time, that I was showing off. I threw my coat open full in the gaze of a certain general's wife and three stuck-up daughters. They saw the splendour of my vestment—not unbecoming to the wearer, neither was the wearer unworthy of the robe! I spoke loudly to the porters, and became lavish: I gave them a shilling, whereas I had promised my uncle never to exceed sixpence as a tip. That sum seemed unbecoming a man in such a coat! lined with fur! true Astracan, curly as a nigger! soft as down almost!

The day was not half cold enough—I could have wished that the mercury had gone below zero, only to have tested the warmth of my coat, knowing as I did that my mother and old Sally were like mummies rolled in lambs' wool and Welsh flannel. I should have rejoiced to have seen the porters and guards shivering, nor should I have cared if we had been snowed up for a day or two. My own abounding comfort was making me selfish. It generally does.

My cousin Jenny and every one at the 'Briars,' where my uncle lived, admired and praised my coat and congratulated me on the possession of it—except my uncle, who declared it to be a piece of extravagance and effeminacy of which I ought to be ashamed. But I was not; and I am almost sure my uncle spoke more from his head than his heart—which was a very kind one. He was very fond of his sister and of me, and had proposed, when he retired from business, a year after my father's death, that we should all live together. But my mother thought it better that we should have separate establishments, the more so as I was about to be articled to a medical friend in our town, and she could not endure the idea of being separated

from me at that time. I could have wished it had been otherwise arranged, as I had always liked my cousin Jenny, and the attachment of the boy was ripening into the stronger love of the man. I was twenty, remember! We never spoke of love, but by some indefinable means we both knew how dear we were to each other. The two or three days preceding Christmas-eve had been pleasant exceedingly, and Jenny and I had been rarely apart: now driving out, I in my fur coat, and she smothered in a swan's-down cloak, out of which her pretty face peeped like a rosebud, whilst her little feet were encased in red morocco boots lined also with swan's-down. Then we skated together. Not that she was a proficient, but I was, and had, therefore, to clasp my hands about her taper waist and ever and anon press her to my bosom to prevent her falling. Then we played chess together, when she bungled so much that I was compelled often to guide her pretty soft hand to the piece she ought to play. We sang duets together, though my voice is none of the best, but then Jenny's was as sweet as that of her Swedish namesake—or at least I thought so then. What I should think now is perhaps another matter. We had had a merry evening on Christmas-eve, neighbours and friends joining the family party, and the hands of the clock had approached nearly to 'the witching time of night when,' &c. —the quotation is somewhat musty. Our household were all prepared for bed, when my uncle said:

'Well, ladies,

> "Pleasant dreams and slumbers light;
> To one and all a fair good-night."

Toby and I are going to have one quiet cigar, and then we will to bed also.'

So the ladies departed, and uncle and I sat down with a jorum of mixed punch between us, that potent mixture being the standing night-cap at the 'Briars' on Christmas-eve.

'Toby,' said my uncle, when he had filled my glass and we had lighted our cigars, 'I have long wanted to have a quiet chat with you on a subject which may affect your future happiness and mine.'

'Jenny,' thought I, not unreasonably.

'Your father, Toby Hatton, was the best friend I ever had in my life; and, setting aside the fact that he was the husband of my dear sister Clara, your mother, I should even owe it to you to make your welfare and happiness my most serious duty.'

My heart beat quickly, but there was nothing alarming in this proem.

'You know I have been twice married—once when I was about your age—say a year older. I married for what I thought was love—a pretty face, a faultless figure, a sweet voice, and one or two minor accomplishments. I was not ill-favoured, and had good spirits and the power of applying them to the amusement of others.'

I bowed, as though to assure him that these advantages had not left him.

'Thank you!' he said, smiling. 'Well, Toby, I married—my position, that of a clerk in the banking-house of a relative, who was childless, and whom I offended by my imprudence. He forgave me, after a time, and considerately advanced my position—not much, however—he was too strict a man of business to do that, but my salary was raised to two hundred and fifty pounds a year; and this sum, with economy, should have been sufficient. I strove to make it so, knowing how much my future with my cousin depended on my keeping out of debt. Not so my wife. She was fond of admiration—of dress; and I urged in vain that if she continued to indulge in her love of finery—far too costly for us to sustain—I should be ruined. I talked to a deaf ear. I wanted firmness enough to make her listen. I soon saw—I felt that my welfare was disregarded, my peace of mind as nothing to her own

gratification. I began then to discover that I had not truly loved, neither had she. Love, had it existed, would have been heard. Passion was unregarded. We had quarrels—those petty disputations which as surely wear away conjugal peace as do the droppings of water great stones. I found myself largely in debt—I was pressed by tradesmen—I knew that on the discovery of my embarrassments by my cousin I should be dismissed. So, sorely tempted, I—well, I—I kept back a sum of money which had been paid to a deposit account at the bank. It satisfied some pressing claims, but from that hour my life was hell! I fancy my wife suspected what I had done. She became morose and petulant. In a month she left me. But her sin soon found her out: she died within a month, of fever, in Paris.'

My uncle paused. I also remained silent.

'In the extremity of my suffering I had very evil thoughts—very evil. Your father was then a suitor to my sister. He noticed my distress; but not until my wicked wife left me did he feel justified in seeking to know the cause of my distress. He then came to comfort me. He was so generous, so noble in all he said, that my full heart overflowed, and I told him my great sorrow—not the desertion of a heartless woman I no longer loved, but the sin I had done and the retribution I feared. The sum I had taken was three hundred pounds. Your father was on the point of being made a junior partner of the house he served—his capital was just enough to accomplish it—and his marriage with my sister depended on his obtaining this position. It would take another year—a long weary year to those who hungered for each other's companionship—to cover the advance which would set me free. Your father did not hesitate but a few hours—he set me free—and the angels know it.'

My uncle covered his face with his hands and so remained for some time, until I went to him and kissed his

forehead. He took both my hands in his, and then continued:

'Why have I told you this? That you may know how dear you must be to me—my darling sister's son—his son who saved me from shame and a life of misery. I prospered, and when your father was overwhelmed by unmerited misfortunes I helped to raise him up again; but at no sacrifice on my part—nothing like his heroic friendship.'

'My dear father,' I said. 'I remember when his misfortunes came so suddenly upon him, his only sorrow seemed to be for us—my mother and myself.'

'It was a sad ending to a life of such honourable industry. But the will of God be done in all things! And now, Toby, for another reason, which has provoked this conversation.'

'Jenny now, for certain,' I thought; and I was right.

'Being what you are to me and ever must be, you can only think that there is but one other whose future is more dear to me.'

I laid down my cigar and unconsciously drained my tumbler.

'You fancy, Toby, that you are in love with Jenny. You blush. I needed not that confession. Remember, I fancied also that I loved. You are twenty, and I was twenty-one. Now I am about to break the pleasant dream you have enjoyed for some time past. I am about to forbid the banns.'

I looked up with opened eyes and mouth expressive of the agony I felt.

'For the present, I should have said, until you have moved about in the world a little, and assured yourself that there is no one else, now unknown, who may suit your ripened judgment better. When you have entered into practice—and you shall not want help to do so

under any circumstances—and you and Jenny should think yourselves needful to each other, I will give her to you with the greatest pleasure, and make a speech at the wedding-breakfast which shall assure every one of my sincerity! Come! now to bed—just half a glass more punch. Be a good fellow, and believe me in the right, and that, as I think so myself, nothing will move me from the course I have projected for the happiness, I hope, of Jenny and yourself. Good-night!—good-night! take care of the candles, and go to bed.'

My uncle imprudently left me alone. I was awfully cut down by what he had said. I could not admit the correctness of his reasoning. Because he had married a cold-hearted vixen, Jenny and I were to be kept apart! I say that my uncle imprudently left me alone—with the punch, and I finished the jorum. I went to my bed-chamber. What was the use of trying to sleep? I could no more close my eyes than if their lids had been propped open by splinters. I performed several acts of ridiculous pantomime: I punched the bed—I hope now, not supposing it to be my uncle; I dashed my head upon the pillows—if they had been blocks of marble I might have done the same; I clasped my hands upon my brow—it was feverishly burning—no doubt my brain on fire! I opened the window and looked up at the bright moon and stars. The keen frosty air soon cooled my forehead and my body also. 'Ah! a thought! By Jove, I'll do it!' I muttered. 'My fur coat! wrapped in that I will go to the summer-house where Jenny and I have spent many, many happy hours, potting ferns and flower-roots.' Instantly acting on this resolution, I put on my fur coat. Oh, how grateful was its downy pressure, its soft, warm, cuddling collar! As noiselessly as I could I crept down the stairs, and unfastening the door opening to the garden, I went forth into the night.

The frozen dew glittered on the grass and gravel, and

I felt for a moment that I was in fairyland, trampling under my feet the diamond-dust of those imagined regions. But my sorrow was too real, too heartfelt to allow any fancy to possess me long, and, fearful that I should be observed by some of the inmates of the house, I went into the summer-house, now partially lighted by the rays of the moon, and by which I could discern lying on the table Jenny's trowel, which I had given her in the spring! O happy spring, when neither she nor I believed such a winter could be in store for us! Such a nipping frost as my cruel uncle had summoned from the vasty deep! My thoughts were evidently getting incoherent.

My descent to the garden had not been unnoticed, as I saw the door by which I had come out open. My cousin Jenny! She was wrapped up in her swan's-down cloak, and as she approached the summer-house I saw that she wore her red boots with the swan's-down lining. I rose as she entered the summer-house, but she motioned me to resume my seat, and took her place beside me.

'My poor cousin,' she said, laying her little soft hand upon mine, 'I understand why you are here. Like yourself, I could not rest, and from my window saw you walk down the garden. I resolved to follow you, having by accident overheard all that passed between you and my father, my poor cousin.'

What could I do but press her fingers to my lips? And, to my great joy, she did not offer to remove them.

'What I have heard has shocked and annoyed me,' said Jenny. 'I had no idea my father had been so bad a man. What do you intend doing?'

'Obey him, I suppose,' I replied.

'Obey him? Are you so mean-spirited as to allow him to control your actions?' said Jenny sharply. 'Because he married a cold-hearted vixen, are you and I to be kept apart?' (My own thought.) 'No, cousin Toby, if you

love me—and you have led me to think you do—you will regard my feelings before any whims of my cruel father. What do you say?'

'Jenny, you must know I love you, dearly love you,' I replied, 'or I should not be here at this moment. I, like yourself, resent the cruelty of your father's request.'

'His command,' said Jenny; 'and I dispute his right to interfere with my affections. He should not have allowed us to meet had he objected to our loving each other. No, Toby, I freely own my heart is yours, and always will be if you act a manly part. Three years, indeed! I would not wait three months at any father's bidding.'

'Nor I,' I exclaimed, again pressing her hands to my lips.

'Practice or no practice,' said Jenny, 'I am ready to become your wife whenever you will make me so. As for my father, I now know enough to make him fear me, ay, and obey me. Do you understand?'

'I do, I do; and at all hazards I will free you from this parental tyranny whenever you bid me do so.'

'You swear it?'

'I do.'

Jenny took a ring from her finger, and said—

'Take this ring as a pledge of my troth to thee. Give me yours as the evidence of thine pledged to me.'

I obeyed her. She threw her arms around my neck, and I, almost delirious with my joy, kissed her again and again. Encircling each other with our arms, we returned to the house, which she entered, whilst I again retraced my steps to the summer-house.

* * * * *

But space warns me to be brief.

I pass over the intervening time when Jenny became my wife, and I, by my mother's means, was a partner in a remunerative practice.

My married life, after a few blissful months, had been moderately happy. A little longer, and my society seemed to have lost its charms for my wife, and she was never at ease except when we were out in society, or had friends at home. I found my own domestic comforts neglected—myself uncared for. After returning from an anxious and wearying round of visits to patients, I found I had often to dine alone, and then, to avoid the risk of appearing neglectful of my wife, to dress and join some senseless gathering of stupid people, and to return home with a silent woman for my companion, whose spirits had been exhausted in display and for the amusement of others. I remonstrated. I was twitted with the disobedience I had provoked when she married me clandestinely, offending the best of fathers, who had now closed his doors against her. I resolved to bear in silence for the future.

She had arranged one day to join a picnic party, and as my own horses were tired, I hired a phaeton to take us to the gathering. The horse proved very restive, and at last became ungovernable, running away at fearful speed, and ultimately dashing the carriage to pieces. I escaped with a few slight bruises; but my wife was so seriously injured that it was impossible to save her life without having recourse to amputation of her foot.

When I saw her suffering, all my small wrongs seemed as nothing, and I could have condoned the past had she left me a hope for the future. But it was not to be. She upbraided me as the cause of all she was enduring—all she should have to endure during her life. She never ceased these upbraidings, until I feared that my presence would retard her recovery, even if it did not prevent it. I resolved, therefore, to send for an old schoolfellow of my wife's, with whom she had continued their early friendship.

Martha Grey was indeed a true Sister of Charity,

without the externals, and answered the appeal of her friend instantly. She was plain-featured and ungraceful in her form, but the gentleness of her character made all her deficiencies forgotten. With what tenderness she watched and tended her injured friend! With what patience she bore my wife's unreasoning complainings, which even she had to endure! One so sensitive, so alive to the sufferings of others, could not fail to see that I was unhappy; and in the hope, no doubt, to alleviate my sorrows, she drew from me a confession of the cause. From that moment her sympathy for me was shown in many indescribable ways, until my thoughts were continually wandering to Martha Grey. What I had believed to be love for my wife was dead—killed by her. What I began to feel for Martha was, I knew, the worship of my soul. Her homely face had more beauty in my eyes than the comely cheek against which it was often laid to solace or caress; her ungraceful figure lost its ill proportions, and I regarded only her goodness and tenderness. Day by day these feelings grew stronger and stronger. Day by day I felt more keenly the barrier that stood between me and my happiness. My wife's reproaches never ceased—never would. I grew to hate her.

* * * * *

I was alone in the surgery. I was sitting there to avoid going to my home—to the miserable thoughts which would there be my companions. Around me were the means of rescuing life or of destroying it. *She* was sufficiently ill to make a hopeless change not improbable. The cooling, effervescing medicines she was in the course of taking—lying there before me—were ready vehicles for concealing more than one deadly compound. The suggestion was too terrible, and I went to the consulting-room. I strove to read, but the lines in the book grew indistinct, and the terrible suggestion came back to me.

I argued wickedly, It was but life for life—my misery—her rest. The conclusion was against her.

With my own hand I delivered the packet of powders to Martha Grey, and then left the room.

I had seen *her* once again—the beautiful girl of years ago—the partner of many blissful hours—and a remorse seized me, fixing my feet to the ground, and compelling me to lean against the chamber-door. As I leant against the thin panelling of the door I heard Martha say—

'These are only cooling draughts?'

'Yes—only,' answered my wife.

'If you will be liberal, give me one,' said Martha cheerfully. 'I shall take it, as I am thirsty.'

Big drops of perspiration gathered on my forehead.

'One will scarcely make a draught,' said my wife. 'Take two.'

'I will,' replied Martha.

Two! Death, instant death, I knew would follow. I strove to beat open the door; my limbs failed me. I felt I was falling, and then I became unconscious of all.

* * * * *

I, the writer of this article, and whose name will no doubt appear in bold type at the head of it, desire a parley with the reader. I hold it good at Christmas time, despite the sneers of strong-minded critics and fast men, to make merry and encourage all manner of pleasant and innocent devices, to make the season as one of good-will to men, as my fathers did before me, and as I trust my children and my grandchildren will do when I am gone. I hope they will deck their houses with green holly and mistletoe, and put the latter to its proper use in a modest way; that they will endeavour to gather together on one day of the year, in remembrance of their happy childhood, and of those who strove to make them happy; that they will make their

thank-offerings in acknowledgment of the good which has come to them, and never let Christmas-day pass without forgiving those who have despitefully used them, or seeking a reconciliation with those whom they may have offended. There can be no harm in doing all this; and I, for one, am grateful for very much that Christmas has brought to me. I would, therefore, not have you think that I have told you the story of the 'Coat with a Fur Lining' to make you dumpy, or that the incidents I have narrated really befell myself. No; they were told me last night by my friend Tobias, and I have just read what I have written to Mrs. Tobias, who is now thirty, with one of the prettiest faces and the most graceful figures in Christendom. She had been scolding me for calling her Mrs. Tobias, and not 'Jenny, as papa does.' And papa, who had just hobbled down to a late breakfast, approved of the suggestion.

They are my guests, and so I call her 'Jenny,' adding, however, after the manner of the Laird of Dumbiedikes, the affix 'woman'—'Jenny 'oman'—which addition is accepted. I had just finished reading when Tobias entered.

'O you silly Toby,' exclaimed Jenny woman, 'to tell that nonsensical story to a professed author!'

'What story?'

'What story? The only one I ever heard you tell,' replied Jenny, laughing.

'Oh, ah!' said Toby. 'About my coat with the fur lining.'

'Yes; when you and papa took more punch than was good for you; and when you, like a silly goose, wandered out into the garden, and fell asleep in the summer-house, getting nearly frozen to death, and fever and delirium, and I know not what besides.'

'Ah! I was very ill,' said Toby, smiling.

'I don't believe it—do you, papa? We all said you were shamming, that you might have me for a nurse.'

We all laughed at this accusation, though Toby protested against the allegation.

'Well, you'll never tell that story any more after reading it in print, and seeing what a wicked fellow you appear, and the fibs you have told.'

And I am free to confess that I have taken many liberties with the story of 'The Coat with a Fur Lining,' as narrated to me by my friend Tobias.

THE SMALL HOUSE OVER THE WATER.

BY MARK LEMON.

SHORTLY after the opening of Waterloo Bridge, in 1817, a number of moderate-sized houses, intended for private residences, sprung up on the Surrey side of the river, and have continued to increase until this day. They were soon tenanted by persons who let them out in lodgings, and who themselves, not infrequently, occupied the kitchen and the attics, thus contriving to live rent free, and occasionally making a small addition to their incomes.

The heads of houses were rarely seen except at early morn and dewy eve, being generally engaged at some employment in the City, or at the neighbouring wharfs and manufactories. They were rarely recognised in connection with their homes, which were associated more immediately with their helpmates; and Mr. John Morgan, principal messenger at a Lombard-street banking-house, was really nobody at No. 13 Coburg-street, although he paid the rent, taxes, and water-rates. No; it was Mrs. Morgan who exercised all the patronage of that establishment, and received all the homage of the vendors of milk and butter, butcher's meat, bread, and grocery green and foreign.

Mrs. Morgan was a capital manager, as her house was invariably the picture of tidiness. Windows which shone even in a fog; a door-step so white that a printer's devil —proverbially the most reckless of mortals—would have walked tip-toe to the knocker or glittering bell-pull; blinds and curtains as spotless as they could be in London,—all

proclaimed the exemplary housewife. All their rooms were let furnished—comfortably furnished; and neither chair nor sofa gave out the odour of haybands, as is too frequently the case with those ornaments of genteel lodgings. Substantiality was the pervading character of Mrs. Morgan's furniture, from parlour to garret, and there was nearly as much timber in her four-posters as in the beams and joists of 'the builder's house,' in which she lived.

Her parlours were occupied by twin brothers, who were twin clerks in the Bank of England. The Siamese were not more attached than Saul and Jonathan Black. They rose at the same hour; were hungry, thirsty, sleepy at the same moment; and, as Mrs. Morgan once said, 'they was, for the matter of that, no more trouble than one person, though they paid double rent.' We shall have a little more to do with them, but we will pass up to the first-floor, rented by Mr. and Mrs. Snidberry.

Mrs. Snidberry was exceedingly clever at mending lace and taking up dropped stitches in silk stockings, realising thereby a very acceptable income. Sniddy, as she called her husband, was a clerk to Madame Delafone—*the* court milliner, as Mrs. Sniddy always informed you,—but, of course, in that capacity, not on speaking terms with the Bank of Englanders, who always spoke of Sniddy as the milliner's book-keeper. The Snidberrys were good-natured people, and took small offence at the pretentiousness of the parlours; though Sniddy would now and then look in at the Bank of England when passing, to get change for a five-pound note from Saul or Jonathan (who were pay-clerks), and indicate some doubt as to the respectability of the Bank by ringing each coin on the counter, after weighing it on the end of his finger. We shall have to return to the first-floor presently, and must ascend to the rooms overhead, occupied by Mrs. Melville and her daughter Cora.

Mrs. Melville was an actress at the Coburg Theatre,

then in the zenith of its respectability and fame. A more quiet, lady-like person than Mrs. Melville could not be desired for a lodger; and as for her little daughter, Cora, she might be described as 'an angel in the house,' so pretty, cheerful, and well-behaved was she at all times. Cora was just twelve years old.

Mrs. Melville had acquired considerable reputation in the provinces; and as her benefits had been largely patronised, she was known to have saved money; and her success in London justified the expectation that she would soon attain a very remunerative position in her arduous profession. She always walked to and from the theatre, whatever the weather, and when not engaged in her professional duties, either in study at home or in rehearsing or acting on the stage, she employed herself, as Mrs. Morgan said, 'in making or mending for herself and little Cora,' so that a more industrious, commendable woman than Mrs. Melville could not be found on the Surrey side of the water.

She had now and then a professional visitor, and almost a daily one in Mr. Reuben Reynolds, who occupied the front attic. He was a young man about two-and-twenty, a portrait-painter by profession—but he had evidently mistaken his vocation. Originally apprenticed to a house-painter, he had aspired to signboards; and from a small amount of success in that line, had believed in his capacity to portray 'the human face divine.' He made a very limited income by his profession, and that principally derivable from his good fortune in being appointed painter in ordinary to a public-house portrait-club. Reuben was, nevertheless, a very temperate, abstemious young man, never yielding to bibacious indulgences, except in the way of business, upon club nights. He had the knack of catching a likeness; and that was all satisfactory to his unartistic patrons. Besides, he was always liberal with gold chains, pins, brooches, and finger-rings; and his

waistcoats were more diversified in pattern than any other of the portrait-club artists, who generally limited themselves to an unvarying brilliant yellow.

Reuben Reynolds had also taught himself the violin; and it was to impart this knowledge of the gay science to Cora that made him such a frequent visitor to the second floor. Mrs Melville had no capacity for music; but Cora was exceedingly apt in catching a tune, and, having a very sweet voice, her mother had long debated with herself upon the propriety of having her taught to sing and play. But she had one great fear—a fear not uncommon with persons of her profession—she feared lest the cultivation of this accomplishment might give Cora a taste for the stage; and she knew, from her own experience and observation, what an undesirable pursuit that would be for one as sensitive and beautiful as Cora. She remembered what disappointment, humiliation, and insult had beset her own early youth (and she had been nursed almost upon the stage); and although chastity, charity, and goodness in all shapes may be found in the green-room of a theatre, there also were many vices—many temptations. No; she would not have had Cora an actress for twenty times her own success.

As Mrs. Melville's engagements had hitherto compelled her to be continually moving from town to town, Cora had not received any very regular instruction, as the charges of a boarding-school were more than could have been honestly incurred, as at the best the general actor's income is precarious. Reuben Reynolds, therefore, found a pupil also in the art of writing and the science of arithmetic, and so he came to love Cora with a brother's love, which stood her in good stead in the time to come.

Mr. and Mrs. Morgan slept in the back attic: fortunate indeed were their lodgers in having two such worthy people to provide for them. Exact in all their dealings, no petty advantages, pilferings, or contentions ever dis-

turbed the internal economy of No. 13 Coburg-street; and had Asmodeus lifted off the roof of that humble dwelling-house, he would have declared it to have been occupied by the Happy Family. But, as old Capulet says—

> 'All things that we ordained festival
> Turn from their office to black funeral:
> Our instruments to melancholy bells;
> Our wedding cheer to a sad burial feast;
> Our solemn hymns to sullen dirges change;
> Our bridal flowers serve for a buried corse;
> And all things change them to the contrary;'

and Mrs. Morgan's was to be a house of mourning. Mrs. Melville fell sick—sick unto death. As she became conscious of her danger, her affliction was very pitiable to witness. It was not from the fear of death, or from an inordinate love of life, that her sorrow proceeded. Had she had a husband to whose care she could have confided her beloved child, the grave would have claimed no victory, and death would have had no sting.

But to leave Cora alone, friendless, without one relative to nurture her and guide her, was indeed to make the final parting terrible. The poor actress, through all the changes of her strange profession, had never been unmindful of the One who careth for the widow and the fatherless, and comfort was to come to her now that she most needed it. Good Mrs. Morgan, and her husband, John, had taken counsel together, and the mother's heart was quieted by the assurance that her child should be unto them as a daughter so long as they were spared to live. From the hour that that assurance was given a peaceful calm came to the dying woman, and she would talk to Cora of the solemn parting which was at hand, and of the happy meeting which was to be beyond the grave.

Mrs. Melville had never spoken of her husband as of one dead—nor, indeed, as of one living; but now that

Mrs. Morgan had become, as it were, the future mother of Cora, she, with many painful efforts, told what follows:

When Mrs. Melville was eighteen—she was Clarissa R— then—her father, mother, and herself were members of a small provincial company. From her earliest years she had been engaged in a theatre; and, though her parents were well-conducted people, she had imbibed all her ideas of life and its duties from the artificial world in which she had lived. Love and marriage were always on her lips and in her ears, and she necessarily regarded those conditions of life as the principal objects for attainment.

At that time a young man joined the company, under the name of Charles Melville, and, though frequently twitted with the assumption of this name, he always asserted it to be his real one. He was gentle, manly in his manners and conversation, a very fair actor, and possessed of a much better wardrobe than usually belongs to young aspirants for histrionic honours. He was well received, out of the theatre, by the men in the various towns visited by the company, but his convivial qualities often led him into excesses which rendered him rather unpopular with the more respectable inhabitants. After a time his attentions to Miss R— became apparent to every one in the theatre; and at last the parents of Clarissa remonstrated with their daughter, and also with Melville. The offending admirer protested against the assumption of the parents, and promised to be more guarded in his conduct for the future; and so the matter appeared to rest. But the young man had conceived a passion, which he believed to be love, for Clarissa, and—there is nothing new or strange in the story—she had given him her heart. The teaching of the stage now came into practice. The cruel parents were to be deceived; secret notes, clandestine meetings were to con-

sole the lovers until an elopement and marriage brought the usual *dénouement.*

Mr. and Mrs. R— refused to continue members of the same company as their undutiful daughter and treacherous son-in-law; but the manager would not accept their resignation, and dismissed the youthful offenders to find an engagement elsewhere. This was not very difficult of accomplishment, as Miss R— had already made some noise in her profession, and 'Mr. and Mrs. Melville (late Miss Clarissa R—)' soon occupied a separate line in the bills of the Birmingham theatre.

The young couple might have lived happily and prosperously; but soon after the birth of Cora (Pizarro was then the rage) Melville became so irregular in his habits that dismissal from the theatre was more than once threatened, whilst his behaviour at home became violent and degrading. Mrs. Melville bore with him patiently, indulgently, and only in his sober moments sought to reason with him, and to urge the abandonment of courses which were producing ruin to him and unhappiness to both. At times he would listen to these 'lectures,' as he called them, in silence; at others he would display great violence of temper and object to be schooled, and then perhaps absent himself for the rest of the day, coming to the performance of his duties in the theatre excited by drink.

The managerial patience was at last exhausted, and Mr. Melville received his *congé*—unknown, however, to his wife. On her return from the theatre one night, she found, as usual, her husband absent. She went to her bedroom to remove her bonnet and cloak, when, to her surprise, she saw the contents of the drawers strewn upon the floor, and the writing-desk, in which was kept the small accumulation of their earnings, forced open and its contents abstracted. Alarmed, she hastened down to the landlady of the house, who had not gone to

bed she knew, and made known the state of matters above.

'Then it's Mr. Melville that's done it,' said the landlady. 'I heard him making a great noise overhead—and stay, here's a note he left for you, ma'am.'

There were about a dozen lines, not more, but they told a terrible story—a story that was not to be played out for years. Melville was gone from his wife and child for ever. She had outlived his liking, as he had done hers: better that they should be free of each other; and so he had gone, never to return. Poor wife! she loved him still! loved the father of her child, with all the forgiveness of woman's love!—and he had left her for ever! There was no acting in the drooped head and the prostrate body, that seemed for many minutes to have parted with life at the cruel words which had been just now read.

From that time until the day of her death Mrs. Melville had heard nothing of her wicked husband. Nothing, at least, that she revealed, even to her generous friend Mrs. Morgan; but she had found once on a time, after Melville's departure, the fragment of a letter which seemed to refer to some great wickedness of a son to a father.

'That you are my son,' a trembling hand had written, 'is my misery and disgrace. I am only sustained by the knowledge that all that human care, patience, and forbearance could do for your rescue, I have done. I will do no more, as I should consider myself a partner in your profligacy did I supply you with the means for its indulgence. God pardon—' And there the fragment ended, and the ragged paper bore marks of fire.

Mrs. Melville felt her cheeks redden and her brain throb as she read those terrible words. There was a small dull fire burning in the grate, and she placed the fragment of a letter in its centre, and watched the paper until it was consumed.

The writing was destroyed utterly, converted into

impalpable dust, but its meaning was imprinted on her memory, to be always associated with her husband and the father of her child. It would be buried with her, never to be read by Cora, to trouble her innocent soul as it had done her own for years and years.

Mrs. Melville died, and Cora, young as she was, realised to the full that indescribable sense of isolation which comes only, we believe, at the grave-side of a mother.

Little Cora's little fortune amounted to something less than a hundred pounds, after payment of her mother's funeral expenses, and this sum Mr. John Morgan invested with his employers in the City. The girl's education was now more regularly conducted, though Mr. Reuben continued his lessons in music and writing and such other accomplishments as were not taught at the day-school which Miss Cora attended. Mr. Reuben also 'clubbed' a trifle with the Morgans for Cora's weekly expenses, and would not be denied, as, poor fellow, he too was almost alone in the world, and had cheated himself into the idea that Cora was his little sister. So Cora continued to progress until she had attained her fourteenth year, and then, by the good offices of the Snidberrys, Madame Delafone, the court milliner, was induced for a very moderate premium to take Cora as an apprentice to the noble art of which she herself was such an accomplished administrant. Night and morning, therefore, might Mr. Sniddy be seen walking to and from the great house of business of Madame Delafone, the court milliner in Pall Mall, with pretty graceful Cora Melville on his arm, and indulging in the self-deceit that the admiring passers-by believed her to be his daughter. Sniddy would gladly have adopted the lonely girl had such a recognition been of any use to her, but certain cormorant nephews and nieces, on both sides the wedding-ring, kept Mr. Sniddy's balance very low at his banker's.

Cora advanced rapidly in her new vocation, displaying

much natural taste and capacity, and having withal an easy graceful manner that contrasted very favourably with her less gifted companions. Madame Delafone did not fail to notice these advantages in her young pupil, and, after a year and a half at the needle, promoted Cora to the show-room, where she had to attend upon the distinguished ladies who honoured the court milliner with their custom. The faculty of imitation is common to most women, and Cora soon acquired that ease of manner which distinguishes the well-bred among our countrywomen, and this, added to her personal beauty and graceful figure, made her rather conspicuous among her associates. As for Mrs. Morgan, she fairly idolised her little *protégée*, and almost regretted the announcement Cora made one evening, that for the future she was to have a salary—yes, money for her services, and more than enough to supply all her wants in clothes and washing!

Cora's seventeenth birthday was at hand, and Mrs. Morgan confided to Mrs. Snidberry how much she desired to give a little party on the occasion; but the parlours were limited in space, even if the twins would place them at her disposal for the evening. Mrs. Snidberry wouldn't hear of the parlours—unless for a supper room, and insisted upon her own apartments being devoted to the evening's festivities. Besides, there was room for a dance, if Mr. Reuben would play the fiddle, as no doubt he would be too happy to do; and there was the loo-table for a round game; and, in fact, the first-floor had natural claims to be used for a party.

And so it was all arranged, and Saul and Jonathan willingly resigned possession of their rooms, and waived all considerations of superiority over the milliner's book-keeper, and accepted Mrs. Morgan's invitation—for they had a bowing acquaintance with the pretty Cora, and were only too glad to improve it.

The invitations were, of course, limited, being issued

only to the inmates of No. 13, two nieces and a nephew of the Snidberrys, Miss Rusk, the baker's daughter, and one of the junior clerks in the Lombard-street bank, whose mother, being the housekeeper to that establishment, was a personal friend of Mr. Morgan. Shall we make sport of that happy gathering and scoff at their simple enjoyment? Shall we sneer at the rude plenty and hot viands of that honest supper, and affect an indigestion at the heartiness of its consumption? No; rather let our poor goosequill turn up its nib and refuse to transcribe another word of this story.

Of the after consequences we have a right to speak, as they have a material influence on some of the friends whom we have introduced to you.

From that pleasant evening a marked change came over the twin clerks. They were moody frequently, and there seemed to be an absence of that unreserved confidence which had hitherto distinguished their peaceful lives. It had been their Sunday custom to rise early and go forth in search of popular preachers or pleasant suburban churches, and so combine a certain innocent amusement with their devotions. All that was changed. With one consent they seemed to desire to patronise the local church frequented by the Morgans and Miss Melville, although neither of the twins sought further intercourse than a passing 'good-morning,' or, in extreme cases, a remark on the weather. Saul had never accounted for this change to Jonathan, neither had Jonathan alluded to the subject to Saul, but both became aware after a time that there was a secret between them for the first time in their lives. And not only a secret, but one which seemed to beget an unpleasantness of feeling towards each other, to which they had hitherto been utter strangers.

Such a state of affairs must have an end, or their brotherly love would suffer; and so Saul said one evening, when they had been a full hour over their tea,

'Jonathan, something has occurred to change you of late.'

'Indeed, Saul, I have thought the same of you, I confess, and could not account for it.'

'I think I can,' said Saul, with a deep sigh. 'You look upon me as a rival.'

'A rival, brother!' replied Jonathan, colouring up to his eyes. 'A rival in what?'

'In your love for Cora Melville,' said Saul. 'Am I not right?'

Jonathan held down his head as he spoke. 'And if I have thought so, have I been wrong?'

'I never told you a lie, Jonathan,' answered Saul, 'nor will I do so now. I have a feeling towards that lovely girl that I never had for any other woman. Do we sympathise in this as we have done in all other matters, Jonathan?'

'Yes—yes!' cried Jonathan; 'I am sure I should love her; feeling, as I do, the greatest admiration for what I have already seen of her.'

'Then it is well, Jonathan, that we have come to this understanding now—now that we may escape from the misery that might come to both of us.'

'What do you mean?' asked Jonathan.

'This, brother; I could not ask or expect you to make a sacrifice which I feel I could not make myself. I could not ask you to leave the chance of winning Cora Melville to me, any more than I could say yes to you, did you make such a request to me. Do you follow me?'

'Yes; and guess what you are about to propose.'

'The only wise course open to us, my dear old Jonathan. Let us beat a retreat: let us give up these rooms at once, and turn our backs upon this enchantress, beautiful and charming as she is.'

'But who might have brought dissension between us

from her very goodness,' said Jonathan. 'We will go from here; and the sooner the better, old boy.'

So Mrs. Morgan was surprised the next morning to receive a week's notice from the parlours, but conveyed in the kindest and the most regretful expressions; and the twins, Saul and Jonathan, took their departure, without any attempt to say good-bye to Cora—although their parting from Mrs. Morgan was not without tears on the part of the lady, and sundry spasmodic contortions of face on the part of the gentlemen.

For the first time for five years did 'Apartments to let' appear in the windows of No. 13; and so unusual was the circumstance, that milk and butter, butcher's meat, and grocery green and foreign, were questioned over and over again by the astonished neighbours.

On the second day after the exhibition of the placard in Mrs. Morgan's window a gentleman applied to see the apartments. As the rooms were unexceptionable, and the terms very moderate, they were accepted. He gave the name of Mr. Morton, and referred Mrs. Morgan to a legal firm in the City to vouch for his respectability.

Mr. Morton's appearance was prepossessing, as he had the bearing of a gentleman, was good-looking, about forty years of age, with a clear mellow voice that was pleasing to the ear. Inquiries were to be made the following day, and the day after he proposed to take possession. The gentlemen in the City to whom reference was to be made were known by repute to Mr. Morgan, and a satisfactory report having been obtained from one of their clerks, Mr. Morton became the tenant of the parlours at No. 13. He proved not quite such a model lodger as the twins had been, as he smoked a great deal, and on the second night of his occupancy came home rather late, and kept his bed long into the morning the next day. Of course he had a right to consult his own tastes and habits.

'I'm rather late this morning, Mrs. Morgan,' he said, as

that lady placed his breakfast on the table, 'but I was detained by some friends last night, and I can't do without my modicum of sleep.'

'Oh, don't mention it, sir,' replied Mrs. Morgan; 'you didn't disturb no one.'

'By the bye, was that your daughter I saw return yesterday evening, in company of an elderly gentleman?' asked Mr. Morton carelessly.

'Well, no, sir; she's not exactly my daughter, though I have had sole care of her for rather more than five years—ever since her poor mother died in this house.'

'Her mother died here, did she?' asked Morton, filling his mouth with egg.

'Yes, sir,' continued Mrs. Morgan, who liked a little gossip, and especially when she could talk of Cora. 'The poor lady was a play-actress, without any one that cared for her, and so Morgan and I took charge of Cora when she died, and have helped to bring her up; and a dear clever girl she is.'

'Clever, ay?' repeated Mr. Morton; 'can read and write, I suppose?'

'And sing, and play on the fiddle a little,' said Mrs. Morgan.

'Play on the fiddle!—that's a funny instrument for a young lady to practise,' said Mr. Morton, laughing. 'How came she by that accomplishment?'

And then Mrs. Morgan entered into the full particulars of Cora's little story; and had not finished even when Mr. Morton had done his breakfast.

When Mrs. Morgan had ended, Mr. Morton said,

'Very interesting, 'pon my word. Does she ever speak of her father?'

'Oh dear, no,' replied Mrs. Morgan; 'she never knowed him.'

'But—but she may have heard of him from her mother.'

'I think not, sir. If I might give an opinion,' said Mrs. Morgan mysteriously, 'I am afraid he was a bad man —a very bad man.'

'Judge not, lest ye be judged,' said Mr. Morton gravely, adding, 'When does your husband come home?'

'About six, sir; in fact we have tea at six,' replied Mrs. Morgan, rather surprised at the inquiry.

'Then when you have had your tea I should be glad to see you both on a subject interesting to us all,' said Mr. Morton. 'I shall get a chop in the City, Mrs. Morgan, so you will not make any preparations for my dinner.'

Mrs. Morgan was greatly perplexed by this conversation; and an interview which she had with Mrs. Snidberry did not make matters clearer. There was nothing for it but to wait Mr. Morgan's return, and Mr. Morton's revelation, whatever that might be.

Mr. Morgan returned punctually at half-past five, and the parlours followed almost immediately afterwards. The worthy bank-messenger was quite as much puzzled as his wife, and made a most indifferent tea, scalding his throat and leaving his water-cresses untouched—an almost unparalleled instance of forgetfulness on his part.

Having put on his best coat and a clean cravat, Mr. Morgan, preceded by his wife, made his way to the parlours. Mr. Morton received them very pleasantly, and, by a few judicious remarks about the weather, and the agreeableness of the locality of No. 13, contrived to stop Mr. Morgan rubbing his hands, smoothing his hair, and otherwise displaying his nervousness.

'I have asked for this interview,' said Mr. Morton, after a brief pause, 'to put you in possession of some facts which it is important should be known to you. During our conversation this morning, Mrs. Morgan, you told me that your ward, Miss Melville, had never known, or even heard of, her father, and that he was a very bad man.'

'Yes, sir, I believe I did,' replied Mrs. Morgan boldly.

'It is well that Miss Melville has not heard of her father, if your impression of him should have accompanied the information, and I am grateful that she has been spared that injustice.'

'You, sir!' exclaimed Mr. and Mrs. Morgan.

'Yes, I,' said Mr. Morton solemnly. 'You no doubt derived your impression of Mr. Melville's character from Mrs. Melville?'

'Yes, certainly,' replied Mrs. Morgan; 'but I never heard of him until the poor creature was dying.'

'Had she lived until now, madam, she would have told a different tale,' said Mr. Morton; 'and it is to disabuse you of the wrong you do Mr. Melville, as he was called, that I have asked you here.

'Mr. Melville was more "sinned against than sinning," believe me—the younger son of an avaricious father, and an evil-tempered, unfeeling, unforgiving man. For a mere boyish fault, that wicked father turned his son, penniless and friendless, upon the world to starve—to perish. Melville had a brave heart, and he fought his way out of the gutter. He married, as you have heard; and you have heard also, he deserted his wife and child.'

'Yes, sir, I did hear as much,' answered Mrs. Morgan; 'and wicked it was of him to do so.'

'No; he left them in charge of a trusted friend, whilst he resolved to find in another land the independence he could not obtain for them in this. But Fate, or Providence, or what you will, was against him. The ship in which he sailed for a distant land was storm-driven, and after days of almost unparalleled suffering, Melville was wrecked on a lonely part of the coast of South Africa. The savage wretches who crowded the beach butchered the unfortunate seamen whom the sea had placed at their mercy. Butchered all except Melville and a young lad. Happier for them had they too died with their comrades. For fifteen years were those two white men the slaves of their

savage captors, hewers of wood and drawers of water, until at last life became so burdensome, that at all hazards Melville and his companion resolved to escape or perish. They succeeded at the expense of great suffering, and two months ago found their way back to England; Melville to find his father dead, but rendering the tardy justice of providing his injured son with the means of decent existence, and the right to resume his name of Morton.'

'Good gracious!' cried Mrs. Morgan, 'and are you Mr. Melville, sir?'

'I am; and you hear, madam, how much appearances have wronged me,' replied Morton, producing sundry papers from the pocket of his coat. 'These papers will satisfy you that I speak the truth. There is a copy of the certificate of my marriage with Clarissa R—, though in the name I then assumed of Melville. There, the certificate of my daughter's baptism.'

'And what do you—I mean, why have you come here, sir?' asked Mrs. Morgan.

'Why, Mrs. Morgan, can you ask?' said Morton. 'I have come to claim my child, to find in her love some compensation for the sufferings I have undergone. I trust to you to break this matter to her. You will do so gently, carefully, Mrs. Morgan, and add to the many obligations I already owe you.'

Mrs. Morgan was very sad at heart at this discovery of Cora's father, but she promised to break the intelligence to her foster-daughter, and prepare her for a meeting with Mr. Morton.

You have heard Mr. Morton's story; now please hear ours.

Morton was, as he had said, the father of Cora, and had now resumed his real name. But he had been a wicked son, even to the extent of stealing his mother's jewels, and forging upon his father. He left England, not to be

wrecked, however, and to undergo the life of suffering which he had described, but to wander about America as actor, slave-jobber, rowdy, until he heard of his father's death, and that the forgiving parent had left his more than prodigal son a weekly annuity of four pounds. He returned to England, and more from curiosity than better feeling, inquired the fate of his wife and child. Had Cora proved less attractive than he had found her, she might have remained a charge to good Mrs. Morgan; but when he saw her the lovely graceful woman she was, he had conceived a scheme for the future which would turn to his profit and to the procuration of more liberal means for his sensual indulgences.

Cora was too ready to believe her father's story, and even the Snidberrys, who were more worldly wise than the rest of the inmates of No. 13, were induced to give credence to the extraordinary statement, the more so as Mr. Morton repeated it verbatim, at their especial solicitation, two or three times. Cora was delighted with her father, and he soon obtained the ascendency over her necessary to carry out the plan he had proposed to himself. Imperceptibly to her, he created in her mind a consciousness of her personal advantages, and by degrees led her to see degradation and drudgery in the occupation which had hitherto been so agreeable to her. He then hinted at an escape from this sordid life, and told her of many who had risen to wealth and distinction by the aid of less attractions than she possessed, and by the exercise of far inferior talents than those with which she was endowed. Cora's ambition was aroused, her discontent increased by what her father told her day by day, and at last she requested to be put in the way to fame and fortune. His end was gained. Cora was to become an actress, and make market of her beauty and her accomplishments. The consequence of this determination of Cora and her father was almost fatal to Mrs. Morgan.

That good creature wrung her hands, wept, and would not be comforted, despite all the consolation of her husband.

'It ain't our faults, my dear,' he said. 'We never put such notions into her head. You ain't theaterical, and I ain't theaterical, and whatever comes of it she can't blame us. He's done it all—he's her father, and knows best.'

'No, he doesn't! he doesn't!' exclaimed Mrs. Morgan. 'Her poor dear mother would have rather seen her in her grave first, and so would I.'

As for Reuben Reynolds, he hardly knew whether to be sorry or glad. He was not altogether ignorant of the trials and temptations to which a young and beautiful actress was exposed; but then he had such a high opinion of Cora, that he hoped only that the utmost good would follow this change of employment.

Cora was greatly grieved at the distress of her old friends, but her father had gained such an ascendency over her, and had so excited her dormant vanity, that she resolutely persisted in carrying out the plans he had formed for her advancement.

An engagement at Bath was soon procured for her, and her success was sufficient to encourage her in a continuance in the profession. After a twelvemonth's earnest study and practice, Cora's fame reached the London green-rooms, and led to a probationary appearance at Covent Garden Theatre.

She made her *début* in Beatrice, and her graceful figure, charming face, and elegant manners, combined with a sweet voice and intelligent interpretation of the part, won her an enthusiastic reception from the audience. The result was a two years' engagement at fourteen pounds a week—a large salary in those days.

The entrance to the green-room of the Theatre Royal was then a privilege much coveted by the men of fashion, and was restricted to certain patrons of the theatre and persons distinguished in art, science, and literature. No

one was admissible except in evening dress, the utmost decorum was preserved (indeed, as it is now), and the place had all the charms of a most agreeable *conversazione.* Miss Melville was the star of the season, and the most distinguished visitors eagerly sought an introduction to her. Mr. Morton, her father, being a very presentable person, soon became intimate with most of the younger *habitués* of the green-room, and possessing gentlemanly manners and great convivial qualities, he passed part of his days and nearly all his nights in what was called 'good company.' His constitution, however, had been too much tried by a life of excesses to bear this new strain upon it, and before the expiration of his daughter's engagement he was overtaken by disease and died.

Cora was now alone in the world which had been chosen for her. The Morgans had never recovered her abandonment of them, and having sold off their furniture, had retired into the country to live on their savings and an annuity granted to Mr. Morgan by his old employers, who had been saved from a great loss by a discovery made by their faithful messenger. The Snidberrys had also left London, having come into a small independence unexpectedly. They fled to avoid the cormorants who, on this accession of wealth, worried uncle and aunt more persistently than ever.

Mr. Reuben Reynolds was the only one of Cora's old friends that remained to her, and he was her guide and counsellor on many occasions of difficulty.

St. John's Wood was then establishing itself, and Cora occupied a small house near the top of Baker-street. Her establishment was a very modest one, consisting of two female domestics and a maid named Grace, who acted as her chaperone and dresser at the theatre.

It was impossible for Cora to avoid being annoyed by the marked attentions of many of the 'men-about-town,' who conceived that the actress must necessarily be grati-

fied at their fulsome compliments, and more insulting advances. But Cora managed to rebuke their impertinences without giving them positive offence, although she made it a rule to return all the presents which came to her, whenever she could detect the donor. As this was her general rule, she said, no one ought to be offended by it. All presents, did we say? That is not the truth; for one happy fellow was privileged to provide her bouquets; and a certain diamond ring which she always wore, as though it were a talisman, was whispered to have been the gift of Mr. Henry Charleston, the wealthy stock-broker of Cadogan-place. He was a constant visitor to the green-room whenever Cora played. He waited for her behind the scenes, and conducted her to her little hired *vis-à-vis*, and lingered always a few minutes before he bade her good-night. They had been seen walking together in Kensington Gardens and the Regent's Park, and twice at least entering St. John's Wood chapel together. Those who know anything of the gossip of a theatre can imagine the story which was constructed out of these slight materials.

It was Christmas-eve—or rather the morning preceding Christmas-day; and, as Cora was to be 'out of the bill' during the run of the forthcoming pantomime, she had no business to call her to the theatre, and had gone therefore to take a walk in the park adjoining. 'The season' was made the excuse by Captain Smoucher, and three or four other men of his kidney, to make morning calls at Cora's house, and, as she was from home, leaving sundry Christmas gifts for her acceptance.

Grace, Cora's maid, smiled as she received these presents, and the silly compliments which accompanied them, and told her cousin Sally—who had called to wish her a merry Christmas and have a glass of hot elder wine—what labour in vain the poor fellows were taking.

'Come up into the drawing-room, and see what we've

got this morning,' said Grace to her cousin. 'Here's presents enough to set up a stall in the Soho Bazaar, and yet I'll be bound missus will scarcely notice one of them. She's a strange whimsical creature; very hasty, but very kind-hearted; and I should be happy enough if I thought we were quite respectable—Mr. Charleston, for instance. It's an odd way of wooing, to accompany every note with an arm-chair, a sofa, a piano; yet that's the way with him, and mistress receives them as a matter of course. He is always about the theatre; walks or rides home with us; stays to supper lately: I hardly know what to do.'

'It certainly does look odd,' observed Grace's cousin; 'but I don't see what you can do but give warning.'

'I'm not willing to do that,' replied Grace: 'mine's a good place, and I never see any harm going on. Here, look at this!' and she pointed to a Tonbridge-ware box, with a view of the Pavilion at Brighton painted on the top. 'I wonder why this rubbishy box is allowed a place upon the drawing-room table. A view of the Pavilion at Brighton—that's a novelty!'

A double knock at the door took Grace to the window.

'Here she is from her morning constitutional, as she calls it. Run up to my room, Sally.' And Sally made a hasty retreat.

Cora came in from her walk in the fresh frosty air, her lovely cheeks all aglow from the exercise.

'Such a delicious morning, Grace,' she said, throwing her small sable muff upon the sofa. 'I declare I could have walked for another hour. Oh, you've had callers, I see,' as Captain Smoucher's flowers and packet caught her eye: 'who has been?'

'Captain Smoucher, ma'am,' replied Grace, 'called, and left them flowers and parcel,' opening the latter, and displaying a pretty sandal-wood box, filled with Paris gloves.

'What an oaf the man is!' exclaimed Cora; and then

muttered, 'O Henry! when am I to be rescued from these insults? Here, Grace, take away these gloves and this box.'

'Not this beautiful box?' asked Grace, in surprise: 'surely, madam, it might take the place of this old one.'

Cora, clasping the despised Tonbridge-ware in both hands, exclaimed,

'That was the first treasure of my girlhood, and now contains what I prize more than all the jewels I possess. Some day, Grace, you shall see its contents—and that soon, very soon, I hope.' She paused for a moment, and then added, 'Has Mr. Reynolds sent back the picture?'

'The portrait of your mother?—no, madam,' replied Grace. 'He has had it long enough, I'm sure; he walks in and out of this house—'

'Grace!' interrupted her mistress, 'Mr. Reynolds is a most dear friend—a true friend; not like Captain Smoucher and his tribe. One word for all, Grace: Mr. Reynolds is as dear to me as a brother, and I request you to treat him with proper respect.'

'I am sure, madam, I am polite to every one, even to the artists and authors who call to see you,' replied Grace. 'Oh, how I wish I was a great actress!'

'Indeed!—you envy me?' asked Cora.

'Not with a bad envy,' replied Grace; 'but when you are kind enough to let me go in front, and I see you act, and hear the audience applaud, I could cry with—with admiration.'

'Yes,' said Cora, looking at herself in the glass, 'there are times when an actress is to be envied; when by her individual power she holds in thrall the minds of hundreds, and makes them for a time real partakers in her mimic joys or sorrows. It is a great reward to know that her art often cheats the sorrowing of their cares, and lightens the burden of the heavy-laden.'

'O madam, pray go on, ma'am!' said Grace. 'It's quite like being at the theatre.'

Grace's observation reminded Cora that she was acting a little in private; and so, with a slight tinge of a blush on her cheek, she said,

'Those are her triumphs, Grace; somewhat dearly purchased by the ill-construction which generally follows her from the stage-door. Take away my things.'

Cora went to the window and looked out. It was charming weather—cold and dry, the air quite exhilarating. 'That's right, old fellows,' she thought, as two men met in the street; 'shake each other again by the hand, as though you really meant the good wishes you are uttering. There's a bunch of holly and a bough of mistletoe! Well, if a kiss is had beneath it for every berry upon it, there will be a merry Christmas somewhere.'

But a private cab stopping at the door set Cora's heart beating wildly, and drove all other thoughts out of her head but one—and that was of Henry Charleston, who, seeing her at the window, could not refrain kissing his hand to her, despite the publicity of the street.

When he entered the drawing-room where she was, Cora ran to him and embraced him silently for a few moments before she could speak, and then she could only say, 'Dear Henry!'

A few earnest words—and perhaps something more—passed between them, and then they sat down beside each other on the sofa.

'Been shopping, I see,' said Charleston, pointing to the odds and ends on the table, which Grace had not removed.

'Oh dear, no; those are all from my admirers and your rivals,' replied Cora, laughing.

'Like their impudence to admire you,' said Charleston, smiling gravely.

'Who set them the bad example but you, Mr. Henry

Charleston?—and who but you can free me from their intrusion?' answered Cora.

'Now! now! now!' said Charleston, holding up his finger.

'There! there! I won't say another word on the subject,' replied Cora, imitating the action; 'so tell me all about the Bulls and the Bears and the Lame Ducks in that wonderful menagerie of yours in Capel Court; and, by the bye, you have not said what you wish to-morrow for dinner.'

'To-morrow?—to-morrow is Christmas-day.'

'Of course it is; I know that. What shall we have?—a turkey, of course?' asked Cora.

'My dear girl, to-morrow is Christmas-day; and it will be impossible for me to dine with you,' replied Charleston.

'What, Henry?'

'My sister and my mother have never dined without me—'

'Your sister and your mother!—am I never to be considered?' said Cora angrily, walking to the window.

'My sister is the kindest and dearest one man ever had; and you will say so some day,' replied Charleston.

'Some day! I have waited for its dawn some time, Henry,' said Cora, seating herself at the table.

'Have I not described my mother's character often to you, dearest? Reared with the narrow prejudices of a city wife of fifty years ago, she looks upon the stage and its professors with—'

'Contempt,' said Cora. 'Is it right that you—you encourage her in such a feeling?'

'I fear she is too old to change, Cora,' replied Charleston; 'I say, I fear—not that I despair of removing her prejudice. But she would possibly leave me a comparative beggar did she know—I mean, did she suspect—'

'That I had claims upon you equal to her own?' said Cora quietly. 'I request that you recognise them by dining here to-morrow. Write at once.'

'Cora, you do not know my mother,' replied Charleston. 'She is proud of her position; used to obedience; and I and my sister are to her the same little children who obeyed her commands twenty years ago. I must dine with her.'

'No—I beg of you—pray to you not to refuse me,' said Cora, with a strange earnestness. 'You have professed to love me—I have believed you—do believe so now. You will stay—I wish it—call it a caprice—what you will, but stay! You will? won't you?'

'You cannot doubt my love,' replied Charleston; 'but you are unreasonable.'

'Unreasonable! Look here!' said Cora, pointing to the things upon the table. 'Any man thinks he has a right to—believe me what he will—to intrude upon my privacy—to write any fulsome lies he pleases, because I have not concealed my love for you. Henry, I now insist on what I just now prayed for.'

'Insist!'

'Yes! If you pass that door without a promise to return to-morrow, I will never see you more!' exclaimed Cora.

'Are you mad?' asked Charleston.

'Will you come? say yes or no.'

'Cora, all I have is yours, but—my mother—I obey her.'

'Then go—go at once,' said Cora, stamping her pretty foot upon the ground.

Charleston regarded her for a moment, and then, covering his face with his hands, left the room.

Cora's anger was roused, and the spoiled beauty paced up and down the room for some minutes.

'But for the promise which I have given him, I would

present myself to-morrow and demand a seat at his mother's table,' said Cora, aloud.

Without having any definite object in doing so, she rang the bell, and Grace, after a second summons, appeared, partly dressed to go abroad.

'What's this mean? Going out?' asked Cora, surprised.

'Yes, madam,' answered Grace; 'as you were kind enough to give me permission to go home this afternoon and remain until the day after to-morrow.'

'You can't go!' said Cora.

'O madam! we always dine at home on Christmas-day.'

'Ah! you have a home! This with all its glitter is not a home—it is a prison! You shall visit your friends some other day; to-morrow, you stay with me.'

'O madam!'

'What! refuse me—refuse what a hundred people covet?' asked Cora, red with anger.

'Not to-morrow—please, madam, I would not offend you,' said Grace.

'But you do—you cannot go!' exclaimed Cora, more angrily.

'Then I am very sorry, but I—you force me to say it—I must go, ma'am,' said Grace firmly.

'Then leave the room, go!' exclaimed Cora, as though the footlights burned before her.

'But I may return?' asked Grace, with tears in her eyes.

'No! I dismiss you now—ungrateful woman, whom I took from charity,' said the angry Cora.

'O madam, consider one minute!'

'Must I ring for some one to show you from the room?'

Poor Grace left the room wondering what had come to her mistress, who, though petulant and whimsical at times,

had never yet proved so utterly unkind and unreasonable.

It was some time before Cora's anger subsided, and then came 'the sweet relief of tears,' and she grew calm.

She had hardly recovered her usual equanimity when the door opened, and her old friend Reynolds—as was his wont—came in unannounced, bringing with him the portrait of Mrs. Melville, which he had taken home to varnish, and repair some damage it had sustained.

'Good-day, Cora,' he said. 'I have brought home the portrait of your mother at last, restored by the pencil of friendship—Halloa! you are crying!'

'No, no!' answered Cora, but her eyes instantly filled again with tears.

'But I say—yes, yes. What is the matter?'

'Really nothing,' replied Cora.

'People rarely cry for nothing, and you especially,' said Reynolds. 'Come, let me know all. The mouse once saved the lion, and the poor painter may help the rich actress.'

'I am not rich, Reuben, and I don't need help,' replied Cora, hardly knowing what she said.

'Yes, you do, and I have always had the honour of assisting you in difficulties. I must rub up your memory a little. Do you remember, only a few years ago, when the poor little milliner, and poorer, perhaps, painter, used to club their little earnings together to enable them to keep house? You used to find fault with my noses and eyes and gorgeous waistcoats, and I found fault with your pothooks and hangers, and made you study hard, little thinking I was educating a great actress.'

'My dear old friend,' said Cora, taking both his hands, and he kissing her forehead.

'Now won't you tell me?' asked Reynolds.

'I am almost ashamed—but I am miserable,' answered Cora.

'I knew you were!' said Reynolds.

'To-day I have received all kinds of flattering notes and gifts, and yet the only man I loved, or ever can love, refused—'

'What?'

'I am ashamed to say—you'll laugh at me.'

'Well, perhaps that will do us both good,' said Reynolds.

'Then he allows me to dine alone to-morrow—there!'

'I don't laugh, my poor girl,' said Reynolds very kindly. 'I understand. You sha'n't dine alone—you shall dine with me. Mild dinner, but a hearty welcome. My father and mother have come to see me,' said Reynolds.

'But shall I not—shall I not embarrass them?' asked Cora.

'Not in the least,' replied Reynolds; 'we'll do a little acting. I will introduce you as the young woman who keeps my rooms in order. You can borrow a cotton dress of your maid, and the thing is done.'

'Capital!' said Cora. 'I shall so enjoy it, I assure you.'

Cora rang the bell, but as no one answered it after some minutes, Reynolds said,

'Your maid does not hurry herself.'

'Ah! I'd forgotten,' replied Cora, blushing; 'I have been out of temper this morning, and dismissed her.'

'Then you were wrong, I'll be bound,' said Reynolds.

Grace had not left the house, however, and hearing 'the old familiar bell,' she dried her swollen eyes and came into the room. Cora went to her old servant, and took her hand.

'Grace, you must think no more of what I said just now. Go to your friends. I did not ring to tell you this. I have changed my mind; but go and spend a happy Christmas-day.'

'Why, you've not asked her for a dress,' said Reynolds.

'My old people, you know, are of what they call a "serious turn," and don't think very favourably of your craft, Cora. You must keep your profession to yourself—in fact, drop the shop, you know.'

'And you really intend to call for me to-morrow?' asked Cora.

'Of course I do.'

'Thanks, dear old friend,' replied Cora, taking his hand again; 'you have proved to me that I am not so forsaken as I thought myself to be. I am an actress, a stage-player, and the prejudices of your parents must be respected by me equally with those of the mother of Henry Charleston. Good-bye, my friend—my brother.' It was her turn to kiss his forehead now.

'Cora, you are right. I only thought of your pleasure, you thought of my duty,' said Reynolds.

'Do not praise me, dear friend; I have been wrong more than once to-day. I have wronged one who loves me, and who had many reasons to regard the happiness of those from whom I would have estranged him. I shall dine alone—'

When she had said this, she gave a sharp scream, and no wonder, for the arms of Mr. Henry Charleston were around her, and his warm lips upon her cheek.

'Not alone, dear Cora, not alone!' said that rude gentleman. 'My dear good sister has told the secret of our marriage to my mother, and her love has overcome her prejudice, and we dine with her.'

'Hurrah!' cried Reynolds; 'that's a weight off my mind; for ever since I gave her away, I felt I had committed some enormity, though for the life of me I couldn't make out where was the sin.'

'La! ma'am!' said Grace; 'you married, and me not know on it!'

'Yes, Grace, I have been so courageous,' replied Cora, blushing. 'Now give me that poor old box which you

have so much despised. There's the key; open it, and look at the paper you'll find there.'

Grace did as she was ordered, and having opened a small slip of paper read what was thereon inscribed.

'Well I never!' exclaimed Grace. 'Why, if it isn't your marriage lines, ma'am!'

'I told you how precious were its contents to me,' said Cora, looking up fondly into her husband's face.

Mr. Henry Charleston, although there was company present, threw his arms around his beautiful wife, and kissed her three or four times very audibly.*

Old Mrs. Charleston received her daughter-in-law very stiffly at first, but after a time, when she had looked long at Cora's beautiful face, and listened to the music of Cora's voice, and seen her darling disobedient son Henry lay Cora's head upon his bosom as though he could not hold it close enough, the stout old lady burst into a flood of tears, and stretched out her arms to embrace Cora also.

When the manager called at St. John's Wood during the Christmas week to see Miss Melville, he was referred to Cadogan Place, and told to inquire for Mrs. Henry Charleston.

Cora's engagement had only a month to run, and as the pantomime had proved a great success, the manager consented to cancel her obligation to him, and relieve his treasury from the payment of Miss Melville's salary.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Charleston resolved not to be cheated out of their honeymoon, and so they and Mr. Reuben Reynolds went down to see the Morgans, and made them happier than they had been for years—not by the hampers and gifts left behind, but by the knowledge of the happiness which had come about the one-time angel of THE SMALL HOUSE OVER THE WATER.

* The latter part of this story is a reminiscence of the French stage.—M. L.

[by J. MAHONY] [p. 89.

THE INTERVIEW WITH THE BANKER.

MR. DAWBARN.

BY T. W. ROBERTSON, AUTHOR OF 'SOCIETY,' 'SCHOOL,' ETC.

CHAPTER I.

'WOULD you have the kindness to step this way, sir, into Mr. Dawbarn's room?'

These words were addressed by a banker's clerk to a young man whose dress and manners were a vulgar compound of groom, betting-man, and pugilist. The sporting gentleman swaggered by the desks and the clerks, looking infinite disparagement at the whole concern, and was ushered through the double doors into the presence of Mr. Dawbarn.

Mr. Dawbarn was the principal banker in Bramlingdon, and Bramlingdon was the county town of the little county of Mufford. It consisted of one long, straggling street, beautified by five old churches, each a splendid specimen of architecture, which contrasted strongly with the Town Hall, the Corn Exchange, and the Market Place, which were modern buildings, and unpleasant to look at.

'Mr. Studden,' said Mr. Dawbarn to the young gentleman of sporting appearance, 'I have to talk to you, sir, very seriously; sit down, if you please.'

Mr. Studden sat in a chair as if it were a saddle, shut one eye knowingly, and examined the thong of his whip with the other.

'Mr. Studden,' continued the banker solemnly, 'I have been informed that you have overdrawn your account to the amount of—'

'Yes; I know all about that, governor,' broke in Mr. Studden. 'I've been told so twice.'

'I therefore gave directions that the next time you presented a cheque, you should be shown in here to me,' said the banker.

'That is—a cheque of my own drawing.'

'Quite so.'

'Well, now I am here,' said Mr. Studden, goading the side of his imaginary horse with his left heel; 'respectful comps, and should like to know your little game. What's to be done?'

'Mr. Studden, I have known you from a boy.'

'Well, I know that.'

'And I now see you a ruined man—'

'Hold hard, Matilda,' interrupted Studden; 'not ruined—pushed for the moment—on my knees, but not staked. I've been unlucky on the races this last year—unlucky at play. Why, last night I lost a pot at loo, and then that girl behaved to me in—'

'Mr. Studden,' said the banker, closing his eyes, 'I cannot listen to a catalogue of your cri—cri— imprudences. I am the father of a family, and—'

'Cut that, governor!' broke in the amiable Mr. Studden. 'What I want is money, and not preaching—no preachee and floggee too. This is the state of the odds. I've overdrawn my account, good; will you let me have some more? tin, I mean. If you will, I am sure to retrieve myself. I've some splendid things on, but I must have the ready—ti—iddity—rhino.'

'Mr. Studden,' said Mr. Dawbarn, 'I do not understand your jargon, nor is such language the sort of thing I am accustomed to hear. You have lost the fortune left you by your father in gambling, horse-racing, and—and the like. For the last seven years I have seen you going to irretrievable ruin. As you had a long minority, and no friends to advise you, I have tried to help you, but I

regret to say, your complete ruin is inevitable — inevitable.'

'Bet you fifteen to one it isn't!' said Mr. Studden.

'What you owe me,' continued the banker, not noticing the interruption—'what you owe me I shall never trouble you for.'

'Bless you!' said the irreverent Studden.

Mr. Dawbarn's face reddened. 'Mr. Studden,' he choked out, 'I am not accustomed to be treated with rudeness, and I don't mean to begin now. I would have given you some advice, sir.'

'Don't want it, thank you.'

'Good advice, parental advice; but it will be of no use, I can see.'

'Not a bit.'

'I shall leave you therefore to the pursuit of your career of profligacy, and may it—may it—' Mr. Dawbarn stammered, for he felt that he was proposing a toast at a public meeting—'may it prove to you that—that—that—'

'Out with it, governor,' said the insolent young sporting-man.

'No, sir, I will not out with it,' said the banker majestically. 'I will not say what I was going to say.'

'Are you quite clear what you were going to say?' inquired the young man who respected neither age nor wealth.

Mr. Dawbarn covered his defeat grandly. 'I will not detain you any longer, Mr. Studden;' he rang the bell. 'I wish you good-day, sir; my servant will show you out.'

'Very good, governor,' said Mr. Studden, dismounting from his chair, or saddle. 'You throw me over—very good; and just at the moment when I could make a colossal fortune. If I had your capital—or you had my talent and speculated—ka foozilum!—what might not be made with the tips I have! I know the way out, Chawles'—

this Mr. Studden addressed to the servant—'you needn't show me. Mr. Dawbarn, I have the honour to be, sir, yours truly, ever to command, etcetera—cetera—cetera.'

Mr. Studden departed with a flourish, leaving the banker in a state of the most wrathful indignation. Mr. Dawbarn was a great man in Bramlingdon, and accustomed to be treated with respect and deference and servility; and though so excellent a person, Mr. Dawbarn was something of a humbug, and the young man's manners had convinced him that he knew it; and it is very annoying to men of fifty years of age to be found out by their juniors. Mr. Robert Studden, or, as he was called, Mr. Bob Studden, or Mr. Rip Studden, swaggered past the cashier and clerks with the ease of a jockey and the grace of a groom. A dozen steps from the door of the bank he met a clerk whom he stopped.

'Halloa,' he cried with graceful badinage, 'Munro, how goes it?'

'How do you do, Mr. Studden?' inquired the clerk.

'Don't be in such a hurry;—well, how is she—eh?'

'Mr. Stud—I—'

'Don't be afraid, my boy. I'm not the man to spoil sport. Why not bolt with her? bolt! I'd land you my last fiver to help you. I saw you the other morning. Ri-tol-de-rol, lol-li-day.'

Mr. Studden closed one eye, thrust his tongue into his cheek, and strolled down the one long, straggling street of Bramlingdon, the pink of sporting self-conscious vulgarity.

CHAPTER II.

In a small country town it is imposible that anything can be kept secret—except murder—and then Rumour points to so many probable criminals, that justice and

detective policemen become lost in surmise, and embarrass the innocent that the guilty may go free. Slow to detect murder, the provincial intellect is swift at the discovery of love. Had Romeo met Juliet at a fancy ball in Peddlingham, instead of at a masquerade in Verona, and afterwards prowled about the garden of his mistress's father's house, the Signori Capulet and Montague would have been informed of the occurrences early on the following morning by several competent and credible eye-witnesses—all of the gentler sex, and the majority on the other side of five-and-thirty years of age.

It was Christmas-day, cold, clear, and frosty. Mr. Dawbarn was dressed in his brightest black, and his cravat was as a monument to the most irreproachable of laundresses. But Mr. Dawbarn was pale and agitated, his head shook and his hands trembled, till the papers he held in them rattled and crumpled.

When a servant opened the dining-room door and announced 'Mr. Munro,' Mr. Dawbarn turned paler; and when the young clerk whom Mr. Robert Studden had so playfully rallied a fortnight before in the street entered, the banker trembled more violently.

'Mr. Munro,' said the banker, when the door was closed, 'you—you—you doubtless know why I have sent for you —on this festive occa—sion—sion, to-day?'

The young clerk, who was as pale as Mr. Dawbarn, faltered out, 'No, sir,' with so transparent an effort that the banker saw that the young man perfectly understood the reason of the interview.

'Your conduct, sir, has been such that I—I—I do not know how to address you,' stammered Mr. Dawbarn. 'That you, sir, my servant, my paid and salaried servant, should have so abused my confidence; should have so dared to try to so injure me is—is—what I did not expect from you. I know all, sir, all. You are discharged from the bank this moment.'

A pang shot over the young man's face.

'You will not be allowed to enter there again. This quarter's salary is there, sir.' The banker put upon the table a small paper packet. 'As I shall not suffer you to take your place at your desk again, there is a half-year's salary.' The banker placed another small packet on the table, and the clerk made a deprecatory motion with one hand. 'I insist on it, sir, and shall take no denial. I also insist on your leaving Bramlingdon to-night, or to-morrow morning, at the very latest. Should you have any debts here, leave a list of them, and to-day being Christmas-day, I will see that one of the clerks pays them the day after to-morrow. There can be no excuse for your remaining, and your absence, sir, is a matter of much more importance to me than a few paltry pounds; so I will hear of no objection.'

Mr. Dawbarn paused and drew breath, and the young clerk looked at him and then at the window, as if out into a far distance beyond.

'My accounts, sir—' he began, when the banker interrupted him.

'Will be found quite right, I daresay. Had you only robbed me of money, sir, I should have been better pleased. I have treated you only too well, and in return see what you have done.' Mr. Dawbarn struck his clenched hand upon the table. 'But no matter. Do I understand that you will leave Bramlingdon to-night?'

Munro took his eyes from the window and looking full in the banker's face, said—

'Lucy.'

Mr. Dawbarn's face turned scarlet, and he again struck the table. 'Don't mention my daughter's name to me, sir, if you please. I won't hear it! How dare you? There, sir, are the rubbishing letters you have sent to her, and if you have any sense of decency or honesty left, you will return those you have of hers—of—of my daughter's.'

Munro took up the letters his former master had tossed to him.

'Did you hear me, sir?' asked the banker.

'I beg your pardon.'

'I say, will you give me back her letters, and will you leave Bramlingdon to-night?'

There was a pause, and the bells of the church rang out for morning service.

'I can make no promise, sir,' replied the young clerk very clearly. 'I have a duty to your daughter as well as a duty to you. If she desires that I should—'

'You set me at defiance, do you, sir?' burst in the banker. 'Very good, very good; but don't suppose that if you stay here for ever that you will see my daughter, or be enabled to write to her. If you stop in Bramlingdon, she goes. Next week she travels with her mother to London, abroad, anywhere, away from her father's presumptuous clerk, who, because his master asked him a few times to his house, to sit at his table, and treated him as an equal, so far forgot himself as to lift his eyes up to his daughter, his only child.'

It had been a terrible Christmas morning in the banker's house. Mr. and Mrs. Dawbarn had been informed that their only daughter, Lucy, rose every morning early and had an interview with the young clerk, Munro, in the kitchen-garden, the door of which opened into a lane, and of which door either Lucy or the young clerk or both possessed a key. Lucy had been forced into confession, and had gone on her knees to her papa, and wept and implored him not to hurt her George. She had given up all his letters, which she was in the habit of placing under her pillow every night, and which letters Munro had written stealthily in banking hours and placed in a certain portion of the wall near the tool-house in the kitchen-garden. Mr. Dawbarn went on wildly and frightened Mrs. Dawbarn —a good motherly woman—into a fit. When Mrs. Daw-

barn recovered, Miss Lucy went off into a swoon, and her father and mother had to recover her, and Mr. Dawbarn was in agony lest the servants of his household should be cognisant of the disturbance, which was an entirely unnecessary excitement on his part, as they, the servants, had known all about it for the last eight months. Poor Lucy was told that Munro was to be immediately sent away, but that she and her mamma were to go to church that day, as their absence might be remarked by a devout but curious congregation, and that she was to bathe her eyes and look unconcerned, easy, comfortable, and composed.

As Lucy and her mamma passed the door of the dining-room, Lucy heard the young clerk's voice. She knew that she should never see him again, and she could not resist her impulse. She ran to the door, seized the handle, and would have opened it, but her mamma pulled her away, and on the other side Mr. Dawbarn rushed to the door and put his back against it. Munro strode to the window, that he might take a last look of his mistress as she left the house.

'Good-bye, George dear, good-bye!' cried poor Lucy in the passage. 'We shall never see each other again; but good-bye and good-bye and good-bye again!'

CHAPTER III.

A YEAR had elapsed since Lucy Dawbarn had bidden farewell to her father's clerk through the dining-room door. He had left Bramlingdon and gone no one knew whither. Neither letter nor message came to Lucy; she was too strictly watched. She often walked in the garden and looked at that portion of the wall where they had concealed their letters. The good old brick that they used to take out and put back again was a thing of the past.

In its place there was a bran-new red brick cemented by bran-new white mortar that you could see a mile off. Lucy had been to London, and had been visiting, not only her father's and mother's relatives, but the magnates of the county, and had seen all sorts of pleasures and fashion and distraction, and at the end of six months had returned very thin and pale.

She had been home but a few weeks when the news came that young Munro had sailed from Liverpool for New York. It reached Lucy's ears through a sympathetic servant-maid. The next morning she sent word that she would like to have a cup of tea sent to her up-stairs in her own room, as she had a headache, and begged to be excused from the breakfast-table. Mrs. Dawbarn knew

that she had heard of Munro's departure for America, but she did not dare to mention even the name of the objectionable clerk to her husband, who was entirely ignorant of the young man's movements. Two or three days after the doctor was sent for. The medical man hummed and hawed and said that his patient was low. Lucy grew worse and worse. A consultation was held. The young lady's disorder was pronounced to be nervous fever; and one white-headed old gentleman from London suggested to Mr. and Mrs. Dawbarn that if the young lady were engaged he should not advise the postponement of the ceremony.

'You see, my dear Mr. Dawbarn,' said the old gentleman, 'your dear daughter's malady is partly mental. She has here no employment, that is, no fresh employment for her mind. If you could substitute new duties, fresh impressions, she would recover quickly. Her energy is wearing her to pieces: she wants, so to speak, to begin her life over again. If—if her partner has not yet been chosen' —here the eyes of the father and mother met—'let her travel, let her choose an occupation, give her something to do. I know a young lady—much the same kind of case—who took to painting, and found considerable benefit from the study and the practice. Italy, now, might create a desire to cultivate some art—say music, eh? Your dear daughter is not strong; her mind is too much for her body.'

Lucy was taken to Harrogate, to Cheltenham, to Leamington, and Scarborough, then to the south of France and Italy. When she returned to Bramlingdon she had to be lifted from the carriage. Her father, who had not seen her for two months, was struck with the visible alteration in her face and figure. He himself carried her to her room and was hardly conscious of his burden. She said she was tired with her journey and would go to bed. Mr. Dawbarn descended to dine with his wife, and meeting

on the stairs with the sympathetic housemaid who had informed Lucy of Munro's departure for America, and asking the girl why she was crying, and receiving for answer that it was for Miss Lucy, he discharged her on the spot.

It was a dismal dinner. Husband and wife spoke but little, and when one caught the other's eye there was a great show of appetite. Mr. Dawbarn drank a considerable quantity of sherry. When the cloth was removed the conversation flagged. Neither dared begin the consultation they felt was inevitable. Before they went into Lucy's room to look at her as she lay sleeping, Mr. Dawbarn put his arm round his wife's waist and kissed her on the forehead, a proceeding which made the good old lady tremble very much, and her mouth and nostrils quiver.

Side by side in the dark the couple lay awake in their luxurious chamber, staring at the reflection of the window-frame upon the blinds. The father began.

'Jemima.'

'Philip,' said the mother.

'What do you think of Lucy?'

The mother heaved a deep sigh.

'Good God!' said the banker, 'when I took her up in my arms I could hardly feel her weight. She was like a feather—like a feather. Jemima, you're crying, my love. Tell me, honestly, now, honestly, candidly, as you think. Tell me, tell me.'

The wife threw her arm around her husband's neck and sobbed—'I fear that we shall lose her.'

It was spoken, and Death was recognised as a Presence in the house.

'D'ye think there's NO hope?'

'Only one, and that a very poor one.'

Mr. Dawbarn felt a mental qualm, for he knew what was coming.

'What's that?' he asked.

'You'll be angry with me, Philip, if I tell you.'

'Angry, my dear? no, no, not a bit,' said the father.

'You know what I mean.'

The banker sighed.

'Do you mean—' he began.

'Yes, I do,' replied the mother. 'If Lucy could see or hear of that young man, I believe she would recover. I'm sure it would do her good.'

There was a long pause. Mr. Dawbarn groaned in spirit, but he felt that his wife was right.

'I had such better views for her,' groaned the banker.

'Yes, my dear, I know you had,' said the wife, pressing his hand.

'Lord Landringa was most particular in his attentions, and Sir Theophilus Hawdon absolutely spoke to me about her.'

'I know he did,' said the acquiescent wife.

'Think of Lucy being Lady Landringa or Lady Hawdon! county people—and then of her being Mrs.——oh!'

'It's a sad thing, dear, but what can we do now that she's so ill—poor thing! And if we could save her life—'

Mr. Dawbarn turned in the bed. 'I'll ask Topham about it to-morrow.' (Topham was the doctor.) 'I'll hear his opinion.'

'I have asked him,' said the mother, 'and he agrees with me.'

'But how can it be done?' asked the banker, turning again restlessly. 'I can't ask the fellow to marry my daughter.'

'No, but you can offer him a situation in the bank?'

'Suppose he refuses.'

'He won't refuse.'

'But how can I find him? Where is he?'

'In America,' answered Mrs. Dawbarn.

'America!' repeated the banker, sitting up in bed. 'Then how the deuce is he to be got at?'

'Advertise for him. If he will apply to So-and-so, he will hear of something to his advantage. I asked Dr. Topham's advice about all that.'

'Advertising is not respectable,' said the banker; to which his wife made no reply but the word 'Lucy.'

'Besides,' continued Mrs. Dawbarn, after a short pause, 'if you don't like advertising, send somebody after him to find out where he is.'

'Send somebody! Send who?'

'Oh, that Mr. Studden; he's doing nothing, and I daresay will be glad of the job.'

'I suppose that Topham advised that too?'

'Yes, he did.'

'I thought I recognised Topham's interest in that young vagabond. I suppose you and he have talked this matter over now some time.'

'I and Mr. Studden?'

'No, you and Topham.'

'Yes.'

'And you've arranged it all between you.'

'Yes.'

'Why didn't you tell me this before, Jemima?'

'I was afraid.'

'Afraid! Afraid of what?'

'Of you.'

'Of me, Jemima? Don't you think I love my child as much as you?'

'I'm sure you do; but you men don't understand some things.'

'But Topham's a man,' remarked the puzzled banker.

'But then he's a doctor,' was the reply.

Mr. Dawbarn groaned inwardly, as a possible coronet presented itself to his mind's eye—and then faded away. 'I suppose you must have it your own way,' he said.

'May I, Philip?' asked his wife, putting her arm around his neck a second time.

'Yes, I believe you're in the right. But won't the shock—the surprise hurt her?'

'I'll answer for that. May I tell her to-morrow?'

'Yes,' sighed the vanquished father.

'Bless you, Philip!' said the good mother; and she kissed her partner, and both wife and husband slept the sleep of the just.

CHAPTER IV.

'LUCY, my dear,' said Mrs. Dawbarn the next morning as she entered the invalid's chamber, 'I and papa have been talking about you.'

'Yes, mamma,' said Lucy, with an evident want of interest in the subject.

'And what do you think he says?'

'Don't know, mamma.'

'He's going to make some alterations in the bank.'

'Oh, indeed!'

Miss Lucy had not the smallest solicitude about the bank.

'And what else do you think?'

'O mamma, I am so tired,' said Lucy peevishly.

'What else do you think he means to do?' continued Mrs. Dawbarn, bending her matronly head over her daughter's face, and pouring into her ear words that made the girl flush scarlet and her eyes flash.

'O mamma, it can't be true!'

'My love, could I deceive you?'

'No, dear mamma, no; but oh, is it true? Kiss me, mamma dear. I am so happy and so thankful, and—and in a little time, when I've thought over how happy I am, papa may come in, and I'll kiss him and thank him, and tell him how grateful I am too, and—'

But poor Lucy could get no further, and sobbed and wept with delight.

'My darling, kiss me now,' said her father, advancing from the door behind which he had watched the effect of the news. 'I'll do anything to make you happy—anything.'

'O papa! my own papa!'

'My darling, you'll love me now again as you used to do, won't you? and — and — there's Mr. Bob Studden's knock. I'll send that fellow off to New York—I mean to Liverpool, this very night.'

Mr. Bob Studden was waiting in the dining-room. He was so changed in face, dress, appearance, and manner, that when Mr. Dawbarn saw him he started, and said,

'Are you Mr. Robert Studden?'

'Yes, Mr. Dawbarn, it's me,' said the familiar voice. 'I daresay you find me changed. I do myself.'

He was indeed altered. In place of the spick, span, new, natty, dressy, shiny, oily, varnished Bob, the delight of barmaids and the envy of grooms, stood a shabby, corduroy-trousered, waistcoatless vagabond, smelling of straw and porter. Mr. Dawbarn hesitated before he asked him to sit down.

'I got your letter, sir,' said Bob, whose manner was as deferential as his clothes were shabby, 'and came on immediately. Sorry I couldn't present myself more decently—but such is fate.'

'What are you doing now, Mr. Studden?' asked the banker.

'At present, sir,' replied Bob, 'I am stableman at the Cock and Bottle.'

'Good gracious!'

'It's not what I could wish, sir, but it's better than nothing. I'm sorry to say I'm only employed there two days a week—Mondays and market-days; but still what with odd jobs, I manage to grub on.'

Mr. Dawbarn looked at the ex-betting-man's wan face and wistful eyes, and asked him if he would take a glass of wine.

Bob shot a quick glance, and said that he would; and in the keen look Mr. Dawbarn read hunger.

'The sherry,' said the banker to a servant; 'and bring lunch—some cold roast beef—and—you know; and when we've lunched, Mr. Studden, we'll talk business.'

Mr. Studden's performance upon the beef was so extraordinary that the banker feared that he would commit involuntary suicide. It was with a feeling of intense relief that he saw him attack the cheese; but the attack was so prolonged, that Mr. Dawbarn feared lest the suffocation the beef had left unaccomplished should be effected by the Stilton.

'Not any more, sir, thank you,' answered Bob to his host's complimentary question. 'I never tasted such a cheese—and as for the beef, it's beautiful. I haven't tasted animal food for these ten days. For red-herring is not animal food any more than a lump of salt is, and I'm sick of red-herrings. Soak 'em in as much hot water as you like, they always taste of lucifers; perhaps because they lie next to 'em in the shop. I may thank you, Mr. Dawbarn, for a meal such as I haven't had for—for—'

The wine Mr. Studden had drunk seemed to have got into his head, and from his head into his eyes. Men are strange creatures—and even betting-men are men—and whether it was the memory of bygone days, or the wine, or the bread, or the butter, or the beef, or the cheese that affected him, cannot be ascertained, but one of these causes, or some of them, or all, caused Bob Studden to lay his head upon his arms, and to cry copiously.

He then began accusing himself, and saying that he was a bad lot; that he was miserable and repented; that his life was an hourly curse to him; that he knew he had brought it all upon himself; that all his friends had de-

serted him, particularly those who had shared his hospitality and even his money, when he was prosperous; that the man who owed his rise in life to him, and whom he had assisted at a crisis, had behaved to him with an ingratitude that stung him to the soul; that he was half-starved and had no bed but in the stable; that he was ruined—ruined—and had no hope.

When the poor brokendown gamester had exhausted himself, the banker began. He told him that he (the banker) had been advised to offer him (Studden) employment, because he knew him to be intelligent, and hoped that his past sufferings had been a warning to him for the future; that the business he wished to employ him on was difficult and delicate—being no less than to go to New York, and from there to wherever else it might be necessary to travel, in search of Mr. Munro; that money would be provided and letters furnished him, and that he was required to start for Liverpool that very night; that it was hoped he would not lightly give up a chance that offered him redemption for the past and a fine prospect for the future.

'I'll do it! I'll do it!' said Bob, rising and grasping the banker's hand; 'and God bless you, Mr. Dawbarn, for giving a poor outcast devil like me the chance. I'll not deceive you, sir; if I do—'

'Hush, hush, Mr. Studden.'

'You'll make a man of me, sir—a MAN! I'll be true as steel. I'll not bet—not on the best horse that was ever foaled. To-night, sir; I'll start this minute, barefoot, if you wished it. I've got a decent suit of clothes in pawn, sir, quite good enough for the likes of me; I'll be faithful and true, sir, and—and—God bless you, sir, and—and—'

Here Bob broke down again, and even stiff Mr. Dawbarn was compelled to use his cambric handkerchief, as Mr. Studden used his ragged sleeve. Bob was furnished with letters, among them was one from Mr. Dawbarn

addressed to Munro, which enclosed a note from Lucy, which contained only these words, written in a large, trembling hand:

'Come back to me—oh! come back to me, my dear; and soon, if you would see again upon this earth

'Your own

'LUCY.'

A few hours after Bob was seated on the roof of the night-coach, and as it rattled past the banker's house he saw a light in Lucy's chamber. Although the night was cold the window was thrown up, and a thin hand waved a handkerchief.

CHAPTER V.

Two years elapsed, and there was no news of the missing Mr. Munro. Letters arrived frequently from different parts of America from Mr. Bob Studden, who evidently found his task to be more difficult than he had supposed. America was a large continent, and it was not so easy to find one particular man upon it. Poor Lucy amused herself by reading books and perusing maps. She liked to wonder if George were there—or there; and what sort of place it was. She arranged all Mr. Bob Studden's letters of intelligence in chronological order, and compared them with the books and the maps, and so traced his progress. She always knew when an American letter arrived by an instinct for which she was at a loss to account herself; but for all these sources of consolation, for all her father's and mother's solicitude, she grew weaker and weaker. She took no air but in an invalid chair. Her father walked by her side grave and dejected. Stealthy shadows took possession of the banker's house.

They flitted on the windows, lingered on the staircases, and hung about the passages; and the good folks of Bramlingdon looked sad as they passed the banker's, over which, as over those it contained, there hung the sanctity of a great sorrow.

Two long, long years and two long, long months Lucy waited and hoped, each day her pale cheek growing paler, and her light form lighter, and towards Christmas she was unable to be lifted from her bed. Dr. Topham said that he had exhausted the resources of his science; and when the poor girl turned feverishly, and, with a slight access of delirium, asked for the fiftieth time if there were no news, the doctor beckoned the banker and his wife from the sick room, and said,

'I've an idea! This cannot last long—she must be quieted somehow. She keeps asking for news; now news from America would quiet her, and she might sleep.'

'We have no news,' said the single-minded banker.

'No,' replied the doctor, 'but we can make some.'

'Make some!'

'Fabricate it—invent it. Don't you see?'

'O doctor!' remarked the tearful mother, 'to deceive a poor creature on the threshold of death!'

'To snatch her from death,' said Dr. Topham. 'It must be done. It is the last chance. We must write a letter from Studden this very night.'

'But—but—but—it is forgery!' stammered the banker.

'Besides,' said Mrs. Dawbarn, 'Lucy knows Mr. Studden's hand, and always examines the envelopes.'

'Then,' said the doctor, 'we must do it by telegraph.'

'Telegraph!'

'Yes. In a few minutes you will receive a telegram from Mr. Bob Studden, saying that he has just arrived at Liverpool with—with a companion.'

'Who'll send it?'

'I will,' said the doctor.

'But when—when she finds that Studden is not in England—what then?'

'We must think of something else,' said the undaunted Topham. 'The case is desperate, and something desperate must be tried. Go and talk to her, Mrs. Dawbarn, and I'll send the telegram.'

With a strong feeling of conscious guilt Mr. and Mrs. Dawbarn put into their daughter's hand a telegram containing these words:

'From Robert Studden, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, to Charles Dawbarn, Bramlingdon.

'I have just arrived in Liverpool. I have news of Mr. M. I hope to be in Bramlingdon by Thursday.'

Lucy read the telegram, and sat up in her bed.

'He's come, mamma!' she said, and her eyes flashed and her cheeks flushed. 'He landed in England this morning—I felt he did—about nine o'clock. He will be here soon, George will—very soon—very soon. Mamma, please tell Eliza to put out my lilac frock. He liked lilac—and to come and do my hair—and—and—and—tell Eliza to come to me—and I can tell her what I want myself.'

The father and mother exchanged glances that said, 'Here is the consequence of our deception. What can be done next?' The thought had hardly been interchanged before a smart rap was heard at the street-door, and a servant came in with another telegraphic despatch, which ran thus:

'From R. Studden, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, to C. Dawbarn, Bramlingdon.

'Just arrived here with Mr. Munro. Shall start by night-train, leaving here at 1.30. M. and self will be at Bramlingdon to-morrow. Telegraph back.'

'How absurd of Topham to send two telegrams!' said

Mr. Dawbarn, when he and his wife were alone, 'as if one would not bring mischief enough. He must be mad.'

Dr. Topham entered the house, and inquired how his plan had succeeded.

'Oh, Lucy is very much delighted and agitated,' answered Lucy's father. 'What we shall do with her when she finds the news not true, I do not know. But, Topham, why the deuce did you send *two* telegrams?'

'Two!' echoed Topham. 'I only sent one.'

'Yes, you did.'

'No, I didn't.'

'Yes, you did. Here it is.'

The doctor looked at the second telegram, and said, 'I didn't send this.'

'No! Who then?'

'By Jove! *He* did! Studden, I mean. Dawbarn, he's come!—he's come! I only anticipated the truth. It was a medical inspiration—and my patient will recover.'

Mr. Dawbarn lost no time in telegraphing back to Liverpool. At Lucy's express desire Mr. Studden was instructed to telegraph at every station, that she might know how much nearer and nearer her George was to her. The telegraph boys were up the whole night, and Lucy kept the telegrams and read them until she fell fast asleep.

When she awoke she found herself unable to rise, so resolved to receive her future husband in state; and when she had looked in the mirror, she begged her mamma in a whisper to let her have some rouge—'not to make me look better, but for fear my pale, white, white cheeks should frighten George.'

The heavy hours flew by. George arrived, and was shown up-stairs to his faithful constant mistress; and the servants in the kitchen held great jubilee, and there was sweethearting below stairs as well as above.

Mr. Dawbarn found Mr. Bob Studden quite an Ameri-

can—according to the notion of Americans imbibed by Englishmen a few months resident in the New World. He wore a 'goatee' beard, square-toed boots, and loud trousers and cravat. He addressed Mr. Dawbarn as 'colonel,' and assumed a manner that savoured equally of the quarter-deck and the counter—half pirate, half bagman.

'As I advertised you, colonel,' he explained, 'in the various letters from the various diggings where I fixed my temporary location when I set foot in New York, I could find small trace of G. Munro; but I followed up that trace, and dogged eternally wherever he had made tracks. At last I lost him, and I was near thinkin' I was done holler—yes, sir—and do you know why I thought I was done holler? He changed his name, and what his last occupation was I could not discover. However, I travelled and travelled on; and how d'ye think, and whar d'ye think, colonel, I found him out at last?'

'I don't know.'

'It was quite by accident—it was. I thought I'd heard of him in Detroit, but I couldn't find him in Detroit; and I was goin' away by the cars on the following sun-up. Not knowing what to do with myself till roosting-time, I strolled into the Museum—that is—that was a theatre then. The first man I see upon the stage was G. Munro, dressed like a citizen, in coat, vest, and pants, or perhaps I should not have known him. I hailed him, and we started off that very night. We travelled quicker than post, or I should have written. I should have diagnosed him before, but the track was cold, because he had changed his name, and gone upon the stage—a fact which I have not mentioned to any one but you, nor do I intend to du—the stage not being considered by the general as business-like.'

Lucy was soon seen out again in the invalid chair; but her father no longer walked by her side. He was replaced by Mr. Munro, who usually propelled it himself. Within eighteen months the young couple were married,

and some time after George was made a partner in the bank. Mr. Robert Studden, by the assistance of his patron, emigrated to Australia, where he drives a thriving business in horses. Before he sailed he spent the Christmas-day with the bride and bridegroom. And though our tale ends happily with marriage and dowry, as novels and plays should end, it is not for that reason a fiction, but a true story of true love.

THE LADY OF LALEHAM FERRY.

BY EDMUND YATES.

POSTLETHWAITE BROTHERS, of London, Liverpool, and Manchester; enormous warehouses in Milk-street, Cheapside; the bottom stories crammed with cotton and calico goods, the top stories lined with thousands of long, flat, pasteboard boxes; curly-whiskered clerks elegantly picking their teeth after their mid-day meal, and leaning in negligent attitudes against the door-jambs inscribed with the name of Postlethwaite Brothers; stalwart porters emerging from cellar-flaps, and dragging down into the bowels of the earth the gigantic bales constantly being delivered from the Pickford's vans perpetually blocking the narrow thoroughfare, and causing so much worry and aggravation to the stout City policeman on duty there. The uncommercial mind stood aghast at the bewildering amount of running in and out which was always going on; at the size of the cheque-book, which was as square and as thick as a family Bible; at the vast array of ledgers and day-books; at the stupendous iron safe, which was something between the section of a diving-bell and the casemate of a fortress; at the amount of Postlethwaitian correspondence under which the postmen toiled, and which they would have roundly cursed, had it not been for the prospect of noble Christmas boxes. Dismayed at all this vastness, much beyond its comprehension, the uncommercial mind turned for information as to who Postlethwaite Brothers might be, what they sold, and why they sold it, to the commercial mind, but all the

explanation afforded was that the brothers were merchant princes, and that the business they did was 'E-normous!'

No doubt of it. When Joshua Postlethwaite had occasion to call in at the Bank of England—and he had very frequent occasion—the cocked-hatted porters in the scarlet gowns fringed with black bobs—than whom, I take it, there are few more haughty gentlemen among our native aristocracy—honoured him with the bow which they otherwise reserved specially for the chairman and deputy-chairman. When he creaked into the Gresham Club, the testiest old gentleman, reading the *Shipping Gazette* in the chimney corner, and turning round, bristling all over with indignation at the noise, suffered his rage to melt away when he saw that the cause of it was Josh Postlethwaite. Old Lypey, the City editor of the *Statesman*, lent to him an ear which was open to no one else save the great Baron Abednego himself; he was the only person on whom Dick Winkyn, the famous wag of the Stock Exchange, forbore to play off any of his practical jokes; and he was always chosen to propose or second the Conservative candidate at the City election. The mob did not listen to him, of course; but the turnips hurled at his head were a trifle softer, and the eggs with which his clothes were bedaubed were a thought more fresh, than those bestowed on the other prominent people on the hustings. And this fame was not confined to London. In Liverpool and Manchester too, where there were branch establishments, the firm was equally well known; while you might walk into Messrs. French's at Florence, Mr. Koch's at Frankfort, M. Delarue's at Genoa, Messrs. Freeborn's at Rome, Messrs. Spiklers' at Jerusalem, or Messrs. Drexel's in Wall-street, New York city, and be perfectly certain of obtaining attention, cash, and credit, so long as you were properly 'recommended' by Postlethwaite Brothers.

'Brothers,' nonsense! Tom and Bill Postlethwaite were all very well in their way, good accountants, toler-

able men of business, each attending with minute circumspection to the affairs of the Liverpool and Manchester branches, over which they were respectively placed. But Josh was the life and soul of the whole concern, of which he held two-thirds, and the London department of which was under his special guidance. He made periodical visits (and at very short periods too) to the provincial establishments, and, as he boasted, 'knew all the ropes,' and had the entire pilotage in his hands. He was five or six years older than the eldest of his brothers, and when he commenced to see his way in life he put them on the track and pulled them up with him. Tom had an elegant villa overlooking the sea-coast at New Brighton, and Bill had a country house and a picture-gallery at Pendleton; whereas, had it not been for Josh, they would have been casting ledgers, or selling dry goods, or perhaps merely acting as 'hands' in a factory to their dying day. It was Josh who, when his father, the old draper and parish clerk of Grantham, died insolvent, made his way up to London, got engaged as Hotchkin and Mobbs' 'out-door,' rose to a stool, then to the dignity of chief cashier and the possession of a glazed cupboard in the warehouse in Watling-street, then to a junior partnership, and finally—when old Hotchkin was lying in the churchyard of St. Beowulph the Less, with his feet sloping towards the Thames, and his head uprearing in the direction of Cheapside, and when old Mobbs, who had privately over-speculated himself, and, in consequence, gone off his head, and was issuing wild prospectuses and casting up impossible sums in mental arithmetic in the pleasant grounds of Colney Hatch—to the proprietorship of the whole business. Out of the ashes of Hotchkin and Mobbs rose the house of Postlethwaite Brothers. Tom and Bill, who had been grinding away as clerks in outlying firms, were called into requisition; and Josh, who had gradually been becoming known in the best commercial circles, took ground as the

head of the house, and acquired a good position immediately. This position he had annually, daily, almost hourly improved, until in his business there was no man more highly esteemed than Josh Postlethwaite.

In his business—but out of it? Well—no! Scarcely a pleasant man to make a friend of, or to have familiar relations with: indeed, throughout his life he never had had but one real friend, and him he cast adrift when it suited him. Sam Barwell and Josh Postlethwaite were boys together at Rickinson's Foundation School, Baxtergate, Ripon; studied in the same class, and were regular chums; 'left' the same day, started off for London together, and commenced business at the same time, though in different houses. Sam got an introduction to Kurd and Churningham's, the cheesefactors in Philpot-lane, and seemed to be making progress, when, unluckily, he fell in love with Miss Kurd, whom he had seen when he went up to Highbury late one night on special business; worse still, found his love reciprocated, for he was a good-looking, dashing chap; worst of all, married Fanny Kurd in direct opposition to her father, who kicked Sam out of the business and cut his daughter out of his will so soon as he saw the marriage certificate. Josh and Sam had continued their old friendship till then, but Josh was not the man to be influenced by any sentimental or romantic nonsense. When Sam, burning in love-fever, had rushed away from Philpot-lane to Watling-street, there to unbosom himself of his passion—a true, honest, and loyal passion, though it was bred among cheeses and butterfirkins—he would find his flame almost extinguished by the buckets of cold, sober common sense which Josh Postlethwaite would pour upon him. It is unnecessary to say that the more Josh attempted to stifle Sam's passion for Fanny Kurd, the more desperately it blazed; and the more common sense Josh talked, and the more convincing were his arguments, the less Sam believed

in him, and the more he hated him. At last, as we have said, the marriage took place; and then Josh, having waited a little and inquired a good deal, and found, without a doubt, that old Kurd was implacable, told his fellow-townsman and quondam friend that there must be an end of the acquaintance between them, and even put his hand behind his back and declined to take the nervous shaky fist which Sam tendered in adieu.

He was right, people said, when, some few months afterwards, Sam Barwell, who had tried to get employment of various kinds, and had regularly failed, began to exhibit a fist more nervous and shaky than heretofore, in conjunction with a hard, tremulous nether lip, a moist dull eye, a perpetual thirst, and a failing memory. It would never have done, they said, for a rising man like Josh Postlethwaite, with such a position before him, to have been mixed up with a fellow who was a pot-house loiterer and a tap-room frequenter, and who left his wife and his baby to get on as they best might. He had a baby by this time, this poor black sheep, and when drink and disappointment, aided a little by starvation, had done their worst, and Sam Barwell lay on his deathbed, he sent a message to his old chum, Josh Postlethwaite, imploring him, with all the earnestness of a dying man's adjuration, to look after those he left behind him. The great Josh was very indignant at the receipt of this message. He very much disliked death and poverty, and that kind of thing, and he by no means understood having anything consigned to him without a proper invoice, bill of lading, and that kind of thing. He despatched a clerk to the wretched address in Dalston, who returned with the news that poor Sam was dead, and that the widow and little girl were in a dreadful state of destitution (he, the clerk, a kindly soul, had left them eighteenpence out of his own money, but he did not say anything about that, like a trump as he was), and made out a piteous case, for which

he was duly snubbed by his master. Then Josh screwed up his courage, and climbed into the Kingsland omnibus, and penetrated dim streets, and explored dark staircases, and finally found himself in presence of Sam's widow and her daughter, a pretty little child with curling chestnut hair and a snub nose. Before the widow and the orphan Josh's eloquence failed him; he broke down in that tremendous diatribe against improvident marriages and subsequent dissipation which he had so carefully conned, and he took refuge in a few generalities about the many calls upon his purse and his time, the impossibility of attending to anything beyond what intimately concerned him, and the laying down of a ten-pound note, with the expression of every good wish for the future of those to whom he devoted it. Then Josh hurried out of the poor dingy house, and found his way to Kingsland Gate, registering a mental vow, while he was waiting for the omnibus, that he would never have another friend—an oath which he kept most religiously.

You must not imagine that because Josh Postlethwaite thus inveighed against the married state, when unconnected with money, that he himself had remained a bachelor—had 'sat celibate, like a fly in the heart of an apple,' as Jeremy Taylor has it. On the contrary, three or four years before poor Sam made his matrimonial fiasco, Josh had led to the hymeneal altar Jemima, only daughter of — Hotchkin, Esq., the head of his firm, with a fortune of thirty thousand pounds. She was a stout, rotund, personable woman, with a face like a door-knocker, with no brains, but with an excellent constitution. Their only boy, Charley, was a model of health and strength, and when he went to Eton soon rose to be king of the playing fields and captain of the eleven. That was a long time after the events which we have hitherto recorded, and some time before the actual date of our story—at which date Josh Postlethwaite was in the height of his

glory. He was a short stout man, rather like a pig in the face, with puffy cheeks, and a short peaked nose projecting between them, with little eyes, close-cut iron-gray hair, and mutton-chop whiskers of the same colour, always dressed in dark clothes, and went in tremendously for respectability. He lived in Westbourne-terrace, as an eminently respectable place, and used to say, 'I live there, sir, because it is respectable. I daresay my means would enable me to reside in a more fashionable quarter, to have lords and ladies for my neighbours, but that's not my way, sir! The terrace is filled with most respectable City men: there's Xenophon Anabasis, the head of the Greek house in Mincing-lane, on one side of me, and Ezra Woolff, of the firm of Mosenthal, Woolff, and Hart, on the other. I'm a City man, I am; and I hope my son will be a City man after me, though he was brought up at Eton, and was well thought of, I understand, among the sprigs of nobility there. Still, he's learning my business, and if all goes straight, he'll succeed me in the house.'

Indeed, if Charley had not turned out all that his father wished him, it would not have been for lack of his father's counsel. The old gentleman was at his son morning, noon, and night, preaching the advantages and blessings of respectability; the miseries and horrors entailed by poor marriages, Bohemianism, or dissipation; and always illustrating his text by the story of Sam Barwell. 'As likely a fellow as ever stepped in shoe-leather, Charley! Quite as quick at figures as me, and more educated in some ways; might have done anything; and went to the bad first for the sake of a pretty face, and then for want of a proper feeling for respectability!' Perhaps this story, as some stories will do, palled, after constant repetition; at all events Charley, who, at the date of our story, had heard it on an average twice a month for several years, *began* to pish! and psha! whenever it was mentioned. *Also, about this time* he began to assert himself in ano-

ther way. Hitherto, during the five years since his leaving school, he had lived at home in the paternal mansion in Westbournia, by no means leading a secluded or monastic life, but keeping excellent hours, moderate in his attendance at operas and playhouses, and never frequenting establishments of more questionable character. But this year, no sooner did the early summer arrive, than Charley announced his intention of going in for boating, and with that view, of taking 'a place up the river.' Josh Postlethwaite was astonished, and at first annoyed, but could find no fault with the proposed plan. Boating was highly respectable, and many of the best men in the City, and notably on the Stock Exchange, had 'places up the river.' His son's allowance was quite sufficient to permit his indulgence in such an amusement. He must go, if he wished, provided, of course, that he came to business as usual. Of course, Charley said; and he went. He was found at his desk with his customary regularity, looked sun-bronzed and handsome, and on the occasion of the two or three set dinner-parties which were given in Westbourne-terrace during the season, Charley attended at his father's express wish. But he always left in time to catch the last train for Staines. Sleeping in the fresh air did him so much good, he said.

It was Josh Postlethwaite's custom to take a six weeks' holiday in the autumnal season, when business was slack, and the other merchant princes were out of town. Sometimes he and his wife went abroad, sometimes to the English lakes or watering-places. This year he had settled himself at Whitby. He tried Scarborough first, but the hotel life, the whirl of the Spa, and the general go-a-headishness of the mixed company did not suit him. So he crossed over to Whitby, where he established himself in the best lodgings on the West Cliff, and took up a commanding position in the place. Whitby is, if anything, a thought overdone with the clergy, the episcopal apron is frequently

met with, the diaconal shovel hats and gaiters swarm, the long black coat and white choker are omnipresent. But Josh was not to be put down by any members of the cloth; he was quite as prosperous, and a good deal richer. He looked them steadily in the face, put his nose in the air, and chinked the money in his pocket as he passed them by; and when the S. P. G. chose the most influential clerical holiday-maker to preach the sermon in their aid, Josh put his five-pound note into the plate, with a look which said as plainly as words, 'That's the contribution of Josh Postlethwaite, of Milk-street, Cheapside, and I'll defy any one present to beat it!' Of course he and his wife made excursions to Mulgrave, and Robin Hood's Bay, and Egton; of course they clambered up to the old abbey, and visited the old town, and saw the fishing-boats arrive and depart, and went through all the very small excitements which Whitby affords. As was his habit, Josh gave himself up entirely to the enjoyment of his holiday, and never sullied his pleasure with the thought of business. It was the dull season of the year, and whatever little there might be to be done, Tom, who always came up from Liverpool and took command of the London house during his brother's absence, could do. So Josh did not trouble himself, and it was a perfectly understood thing that, except under some very special circumstances, he was not to be troubled.

This being the case, it can be imagined that, at the receipt of a telegram one day after luncheon, the great man was evidently surprised and annoyed. He held the yellow envelope out at arm's length, examined it through his glasses, then opened it.

'From Tom,' he said to his wife, after a glance at the heading.

'It must be something very important,' said Mrs. Postlethwaite, 'or Thomas would not trouble you.'

'I should think so, indeed!' said Josh, with a mental

reservation that if it were not very important Thomas should receive a neat wigging for his pains. 'Why, what the dev—'

'Josh dear!' cried his wife.

'Silence, Mrs. Postlethwaite!' said the Grand Llama. 'What the devil does this mean? Listen. "*You must come at once. C.'s in a mess!*" C.'s in a mess!' repeated he. 'He must mean consols,' and he seized the *Times*, and turned to the money article. 'No, they're ninety-five and an eighth! Why was he so confoundedly mysterious? What does C. mean?'

'I think C. means Charley,' said Mrs. Postlethwaite quietly.

'By Jove, Mrs. P., I think you're right!' said Josh, after a pause, and looking at her with disquietude. His wife had never developed an idea before, and he was afraid of the result. 'I think you're right!' he repeated; 'but what can have happened to Charley?'

'Perhaps he's drowned—out of his boat!' murmured Mrs. Postlethwaite; and Josh's fears lest she should ever again make a sensible suggestion were at an end.

'Drowned! stuff!' he said. 'However, I must get over to York to-night, telegraph to Tom to meet me in Westbourne-terrace to-morrow evening, and go up by the express.'

Westbourne-terrace looked awful in the September twilight. All the houses were shut up, the blinds in newspaper envelopes, the families away. The dead leaves came whirling up in ghostly troops from Kensington Gardens, and the engines in the neighbouring Paddington Station shrieked long-drawn-out lamentations over the excursionists who arrived to occupy temporarily the places of the legitimate owners of the capital. Painters were at work on the outside of Josh's house; he had to thread his way to the street-door through scaffolding-poles, and he tumbled over a pail of whitewash in the hall; the servants

were away, and there was only an old charwoman to 'do for him.' He bade her cook a steak, and then he descended to the cellar and fetched up—after half a dozen mistakes—a bottle of dry sherry. He was drawing the cork when Tom arrived. Josh took him at once into the little room behind the dining-room, which the servants called the 'libery,' and where the boots, hats, and sticks commonly reposed.

'Now!' said Josh, 'you see I've come up. What's all this? You say "C.'s in a mess!" Who's C.?'

'Charley,' said Tom shortly.

'I thought so!' said Josh, wiping his forehead. 'Now, go on, please. What's the mess?'

'Base deception and horrible immorality!' said Tom roundly. He always hated Charley, having hoped that his own son would succeed to Josh's business.

'That's a large order, Tom!' said poor Josh. 'Show it me in detail.'

'I will,' said Tom. 'Dick Winkyn and his brother Bill, and some other Stock Exchange fellows, who are left in town, got up a picnic at Chertsey Meads on Saturday afternoon, and I suppose out of respect to you, asked me to join them. I did, and we had a very pleasant time of it, and as evening drew on some one proposed going on the river, and a lot of us went in a big shallop. We went through Chertsey Lock and down towards Staines; and just as we passed Laleham Ferry I saw a young fellow, dressed in flannels, sculling a wager-boat, with a very pretty girl steering him. He laid on his sculls and looked towards us, and I recognised Charley in a moment; but as we got near him, Billy Winkyn shouted out "Ware hawks!" and motioned with his hand, and the next moment the young fellow pulled his straw hat over his eyes and went sculling away before us at a tremendous pace and got up the back water by Penton Hook. I said to Dick Winkyn, "*Wasn't that Charley?*" and he answered, "Charley—

who?" and when I said, "My nephew, Charley Postlethwaite," they all laughed, and said I'd had too much iced punch. But I kept my wits about me, and when we landed I lingered behind, and asked one of the boatmen, who I had noticed touched his hat to Charley, what was the name of the gentleman in the skiff. "Postlethwaite," he said: "been living at the Laleham Ferry House, *him and his lady*, this last three months."'

'Thank you, Tom,' said Josh moodily. 'You would have made a fine detective; it's a pity your talents are lost in the commercial line. I'll go up to-morrow to Laleham Ferry, and look into this myself.'

'You'll find Charley there,' said Tom; 'he said he should make holiday to-morrow.'

Nothing could be much nastier than the steak which the charwoman sent up. But it didn't matter to Josh Postlethwaite. His plate remained untouched before him, while he sat back wondering how it was that his son, so indoctrinated with the principles of morality and respectability, should come to grief after all.

Josh Postlethwaite started off the next morning, went to Staines by the railway, and thence in a fly to Laleham. When he arrived at the ferry he found several people waiting for the boat, which was making its way from the other side; and when they were all afloat in the broad-bottomed punt, the boatman, whom every one called George, had a whispered joke for all the women, who told him to 'git 'long,' and a slap on the back for all the men, and seemed altogether so jovial a fellow, that Josh thought he might get a little information out of him.

'Is that the Ferry House?' he asked, pointing to a pretty cottage with a lawn, willow-fringed, sloping to the river.

'It is, sir,' replied George promptly.

'*Any one staying* there now?'

'Yes, sir, same family as has stayed there for the last three hundred year—Muster Trotter!'

'No, no, I don't mean the ferryman!' said Josh, annoyed at the laughter of his fellow-passengers. 'I mean any one lodging there?'

'Oh, yes, sir!' said George, poling away at the punt—'lady and gentleman, sir.'

'Oh, that's it,' said Josh; 'I want to know about them—who are they?'

He had betrayed too much eagerness apparently, for George, looking at him suspiciously, said,

'Who are they? Well, I can't say for certain; but I don't mind telling you I '*ave* heerd that it's the Hemp'ror o' Rooshia and his aunt!'

And amidst the roar at his sally the boat touched the shore, and the passengers landed.

The little wicket-gate of the Ferry House garden was unlatched, so Josh Postlethwaite passed through it, entered the little passage, and opened the door of a right-hand room, which, as he judged, looked on to the river. At the noise which he made, a very pretty young lady, with long curling chestnut hair, raising her head from her work, cried joyfully,

'O Charley! back so soon!'

'It is not Charley, madam,' said Josh, in his severest tones.

'I—I beg your pardon—I thought that—Oh! is it Mr. Postlethwaite?'

'It is Mr. Postlethwaite, madam; and since you know that, you can doubtless easily imagine my errand. It is to bring back my son from these scenes of—of dissipation,' said Josh, feeling as he looked round the pretty little room with the peaceful river flowing before it that the term he had used was scarcely applicable—'and from your—your wiles, madam, to his mother and his home!'

'Halloa, Pater! you here!' broke in a cheery voice,

and Charley entered in his boating suit, a little flushed, but very handsome.

'Yes, sir, I am here,' cried his father; 'and I am sorry to find you here in company with this—this—'

'This lady,' interrupted Charley. 'Steady, sir, please; and remember while you are here that these are my rooms, and I require you to behave yourself in them.'

'To behave myself! Do you know, sir, that you are speaking to your father?'

'Perfectly well, sir. But even my father must conduct himself like a gentleman in presence of my wife.'

'Your wife!'

'Precisely! Nelly, you don't know my father, I think. Let me present him to you.'

His wife! Then there was no foundation for Tom's charge against Charley of immorality. Josh almost chuckled as he thought of that.

'If this young lady be your wife, as you say, and as, of course, I am bound to believe, may I ask why you have married her in a secret and underhand manner, and without my knowledge?'

'Simply because we had made up our minds to be married, and I knew you would oppose the match. Not that there was anything in the world against my Nelly that even you could have found fault with, except her name.'

'Her name? What was it?'

'Barwell.'

'Barwell? Not daughter of—'

'Yes, precisely—of your old friend Sam Barwell, the peg upon whom you hung so many solemn warnings. Now you know the worst.'

There was silence for a few minutes. Then Josh said in rather a husky voice, and with rather a shamefaced manner—

'May I ask where you first met Miss Barwell? and who introduced you to her?'

'Certainly. Where was it, Nelly? Oh, at a picnic at New Brighton, when I was staying down with uncle Tom last year. It was Mrs. Tom that introduced me.'

'No!' said Josh.

'It was indeed.'

'By George, that's too much!' cried old Josh, and he roared with laughter, until they thought he would have had a fit. When he came to, the first words he said were, 'Come here, my dear, and give me a kiss; and, Charley, is there anything to drink handy? The day's very hot, and I—and I—' and then instead of laughing he burst into tears, with his arm round his son's neck.

Of course he stopped to dinner, when Nelly made him the best claret-cup he had ever drunk, and instead of going back to the dreariness of Westbourne-terrace, he had Dick Lambert's bed—Dick was Charley's chum up at the Ferry House, and was fortunately away acting as best man to stout little George Smyth, who was marrying Miss Alton, the brewer's daughter; and before he left the next day, Josh had made Charley promise to bring Nelly with him to Whitby before the end of the week, when the reconciliation was complete.

'We don't drink toasts here,' said old Josh, from the head of his own table, to a large party of guests assembled on Christmas-day, 'even at Christmas. But there's one health I wish to propose, and you must all drink it in bumpers, without asking any questions. Here's to the health of the Lady of Laleham Ferry! God bless her!'

And he winked—actually winked, the old rascal!—at his daughter-in-law.

'*And it* brought a greater blessing than that—
New hope to a starving soul.'

THE CHRISTMAS SAMARITAN.

BY ASTLEY H. BALDWIN.

THE shadows of even were falling fast
Over the drifted snow,
Gay lights from the windows flicker'd and danced
On the busy crowd below.

'Twas Christmas-eve; and the thoroughfares
Teem'd with a motley throng,
Here one with his neighbour bandied a jest,
There whistled a snatch of song.

Crouching I saw in a doorway dark
A weary, a fearful sight,
Out of the whirl of the wayfarers all,
Out of the maddening light,

A girl, or something in shape of one—
Heaven knows how she came so low—
Gnawing her fingers for misery,
Trailing her rags in the snow.

There pass'd a sempstress, wasted and wan—
O God, there *are* angels still
Enshrined in the humblest, holiest forms,
Ready to do Thy will!

'Twas a hard, hard task for that workwoman
To keep body and soul together,
To find a crust for the hunger-fiend,
And a shed from the biting weather.

A moment—ah, *true* Samaritan!
Thou hast heard of the widow's mite;
Thou hast not a heart that can look unmoved
On that doorway, and on that sight.

* * * * *

Then held she forth her transparent palm
With her hard-earn'd penny-fee:
'I am poor—HOW poor, God only knows;
But thou wantest it more than me.'

Mechanically took the starving girl
From the blessed sister-hand
The small copper coin that might match the gold—
Yes, the *gold* of this Christian land!

For it brought new life to a starving frame,
Though it only purchased a roll;
And it brought a greater blessing than that—
New *hope* to a starving *soul.*

Her white lips moved, but never a word,
Never a word spoke she:
O woman, as thou to thy neighbour deal'st
Will God deal unto thee!

WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED LAST CHRISTMAS.

THE LAST STORY WRITTEN BY MARK LEMON.

CHRISTMAS was coming. There were indications of its approach everywhere. The grocers, the butchers, and fancy emporiums, all proclaimed Christmas was coming. At the railway stations there was more than the usual bustle—more wagons going to and fro, more cabs for down trains, more pleasant faces; fewer looking 'business,' nothing but 'business.' No doubt of it, Christmas was coming.

'Where for, sir?'

'Little Stanford.'

'What class, sir?'

'Second. Put my rug and portmanteau into the carriage, and here's something for you.'

The traveller was a handsome, well-formed young man of two-and-twenty, one who evidently was prepared to look the world in the face and to force his way onwards. His name was Reginald Wainwright.

Having paid the cabman, Reginald entered the station, and, taking his ticket, went on to the platform. A neat brougham drove up and a young man got out.

'Where for, sir?'

'Little Stanford.'

'What class—first, sir?'

'Yes, first.'

'Have your things in with you, sir?'

'Yes—thanks.'

And the new-comer having spoken a few words to his servant, entered the station, and, obtaining his ticket, went on to the platform. His name was Walter Mainwaring. In a minute or two the young men confronted each other.

'Ah! Reginald,' exclaimed Walter, holding out his hand, which the other took somewhat slowly, 'glad to have met you. Why, I've not seen you since our day's shooting on the 1st.'

'No,' replied Reginald coldly, 'London is a vast city; the distance is great between Clarges-street and Finsbury-square.'

'It is you that make it so, Regi,' said Walter, smiling. 'You know that my father, sister, all of us are most glad to see you.'

'Well, I believe so; but a lonely fellow is apt to grow captious, especially when only a clerk in a merchant's counting-house.'

'And what am I, cousin Regi?' replied Walter. 'The governor keeps me to the desk as closely as though I were a stranger.'

'Quite right. You will have leisure enough, he thinks, when he makes you his partner.'

'Take your places, take your places,' bawled porters and guards.

'Where's your carriage? we'll travel together,' said Walter.

'I fancy not; I go second,' replied Reginald.

'And so will I. Here, porter, get out my things—'

'No time now, sir; train five minutes late. Get in, please, sir;' and so the cousins, for such the young men were, journeyed apart until they reached Little Stanford, where their uncle, Mr. Ralph Mainwaring, resided. He had been a prosperous stockbroker, and having purchased a very fair estate in the country, retired thither with an *only daughter to* keep house for him. It was his custom

to invite his nephews at stated intervals to pass a few days with him, in September to knock over the partridges, and at Christmas time to look up the pheasants. He did not shoot himself, but he preserved after a fashion, and invited some of his tenants to a day's sport occasionally.

Reginald was a legacy from a dear sister who died soon after her husband had been lost at sea, leaving her with very scanty means. But her good brother Ralph came to her help, and soothed her last hours by the assurance that her boy should be cared for.

Walter was the son of Mr. Mainwaring's brother, a thriving City merchant, who had ventures to all parts of the globe, and was too busy ever to visit Little Stanford; but he was always ready to send an ambassador, thinking, no doubt, that it was highly politic to keep up friendly relations with his brother, the more especially as nearly all Ralph's ready money was invested in the house of Mainwaring, Wapsholl, and Company.

Cousin Emily was waiting to give them welcome in the station, having driven from Stanford Hall in her pony-carriage, whilst Traps, the gamekeeper, had brought a light cart for the luggage. Emily's ponies were the admiration of Little Stanford and parts adjacent, and her skill in handling them was no less a theme of general commendation. There was quite a contest between the young men as to who should sit beside the fair charioteer, and as she positively declined to give the casting vote, Reginald proposed that they should toss for the honour, and Reginald won.

Emily Mainwaring was a capital girl to have rule in a country house. Without a particle of that detestable 'fastness' which has so deteriorated the charms of English maidens, she had a happy freedom of manner which made every one at ease, and a considerateness which insured the comfort and enjoyment of every guest. She was very

fond of her cousins, and their advent at the Hall was always looked to with pleasure both by her father and herself, and this was made evident the moment the visitors entered the house. There was the beaming old gentleman illuminating, as it were, the doorway, whilst the background of smiling servants seemed delighted at the prospect of increased duties. There was no make-believe in the shake of the hand or ring of the mellow voice which told the boys they were welcome, always welcome; nor was there any possibility (nor inclination) to pass by the *flaçon* of cherry-brandy which Botting the butler had received orders to administer on the instant of arrival.

And then the bonfires in the bedrooms. Emily had seen to them before driving to the station. No heap of cinders just smouldering for appearance' sake, but a pile of crackling wood-logs on a substratum of glowing coals, the gracious heat going at once to the marrow and thawing whatever there might be undissolved by the cherry-brandy. Then the beds with their eider-down coverlids and piled-up pillows, that made the new-comers almost wish it were bed-time, had not past experience recalled the coming savoury luncheon, with its honest home-brewed stingo, and the good dinner which the doctor and parson never refused to share when invited thereto, and no better assurance of the excellence of the viands and superiority of the wine could be desired.

The young men made a brief toilette and then joined their host in the dining-room. Emily had catered delightfully, and her cousins gratified her by doing ample justice to the luncheon. The round pond was in excellent condition for skating, so the whole party adjourned thither, as Emily excelled in that graceful pastime. Then home again to dinner; but however pleasant it would be to recount all the cheerful doings at Stanford Hall, we must forbear, and proceed as deftly as we can to the narration *of the events which* will constitute our story.

To know Emily Mainwaring was to love her, especially if the heart chanced not to be preoccupied. She was not, strictly speaking, beautiful; but if a nose a little *retroussé* and a chin a trifle too round and short would not have satisfied Phidias, yet the rosiest of lips, the whitest of teeth, the brightest of hazel eyes, arched over by the most delicate eyebrows a shade darker than her rich chestnut hair, made ample amends for the classical deficiencies of her happy face, radiant with health and cheerfulness. Her figure was faultless, and made all kinds of exercise acceptable, and consequently she was free from all fine-ladyish ailments which are sometimes thought to be interesting, but are at all times exceedingly objectionable to those who are expected to sympathise with them. She played and sang moderately well, and she always had the good taste to attempt nothing that required the education of a *prima donna* or the practice and genius of a Benedict.

There was more than one eligible young gentleman in the neighbourhood who had the heartache through Emily Mainwaring, but as yet no one had ventured to propose to her. Her father made no secret of his confidence in her prudence and good sense, and it was generally known that she would be free to make her own election should she be ever put to the test.

Reginald and Walter were more in love with their cousin than any one else, and there was little doubt but the young men suspected each other of entertaining this predilection. She might not have suspected it also, but if she had done so her manner was more encouraging to Reginald, as he was generally her esquire upon any trifling emergency. She was freer in speech with him than with Walter, who wanted the confident bearing of his cousin; and when at times he was silent and she detected him looking at her with 'lack-lustre eyes,' she would challenge, *as it were, Reginald* to talk, as though to avoid Walter's

observation. Not that she was ever unkind to Walter; she never refused his companionship in a walk or a ride; she sang or played anything he requested of her; she read the books he brought to her or sent to her time by time. She bade him good-night and good-morning, with a smile that sent a pleasant pain into his heart and made him deliciously miserable for minutes afterwards.

Was she a coquette after all?

Christmas has been kept at Stanford Hall with all the honours, as Mr. Mainwaring had been nourished on the milk of human kindness, and believed he was doing God's work in making as many of his fellow-creatures as he could happy and rejoicing. He thought, also, that he offered the best thanksgiving for the good bestowed upon him by encouraging in himself and others a pleasant cheerfulness, and indulging at fitting times in a 'becoming mirth;' and Christmas was one of those times when he and his household and friends made merry, and found no better way than in following the old customs, decking his house with holly and other greenery, and dispensing his Christmas cheer with a liberal hand to great and small, like a true old English gentleman. Not so his brother Elias. He was one of those who pride themselves upon being too strong-minded to care for such frivolities—he was too much 'a man of business' to care to have the great current of trade impeded but for a day, and though he loved good eating and drinking, his dinner must have been earned by a morning of bargaining and speculation. Hence it was that, at a time when most families gather for one day at least under the parental wings, Walter was permitted to eat his Christmas dinner at Stanford.

Two days only remained of the young men's pleasant holiday. It wanted half an hour to breakfast, when Reginald tapped at Walter's bedroom door.

'Come in. Ah! good-morning, Regi.'

'Good-morning. I have been tossing about half the

night,' continued Reginald, 'and I shall do so for a dozen nights more, unless I speak out.'

'Indeed! What's the matter?' asked Walter.

'Well,' replied his cousin, 'you know that I am rather a blunt speaker, and like to go straight to any object I have in view. And so I have come to you. I fancy, Walter, that we are both hit by the same bolt. I mean, plainly, we both are in love with Emily.'

Walter coloured deeply, and only said, 'Well, what then, Reginald?'

'Simply this. I can see no right—if it be so—why I should give place to you, and I have determined to speak to my uncle this morning, and if he consents, I shall propose to Emily.'

'I have no right to interfere with any course you think proper to pursue, Reginald,' replied Walter. 'I wish it had been otherwise. You have the right of priority, having spoken first;' and he held out his hand to his cousin, which the other took and pressed warmly.

'I wish it had been otherwise, also,' said Reginald; 'but I cannot abandon what I believe will be the making or the marring of my life.'

'Whatever may be the result, Reginald, let us still continue friends; though, if you are successful, I feel we shall not meet here again, at least for some time to come.'

'Oh, nonsense, Walter,' replied Reginald; 'you are a prosperous man, you have a large society about you, and may pick and choose. But I—I am a poor struggling devil, with hardly more female acquaintance than my landlady and her squinting daughter. There's the breakfast-bell.'

The breakfast lacked something to make it the cheerful meal it usually was. Reginald frequently relapsed into thought—very unusual with him—and Walter was evidently disturbed and ate with little appetite. Emily

after a time caught the contagion—dulness—and had not Mr. Mainwaring got into one of his long stories, there is no knowing how the day would have begun.

Breakfast over, Reginald went out into the garden to smoke a cigar, and to arrange his thoughts before seeking an interview with his uncle. As he walked up and down he was startled from his reverie by Bang, a favourite setter, jumping upon him in friendly recognition. Without thinking, perhaps, he kicked the poor brute savagely and sent the dog howling away. As he looked towards the house, he thought he saw Emily leaving the window of the breakfast-room. He thought little of that matter, and went on with his cigar and his cogitations.

Reginald had less fear of rejection by Emily than by her father, who might, he thought, take exception to his social position. But had not that good uncle promised to advance him three thousand pounds whenever an eligible opportunity for its investment presented itself? He reflected also upon his uncle's frequent declaration that Emily should choose for herself, and so at last he found courage to go to Mr. Mainwaring.

The old gentleman was hardly surprised, as he believed every one must love his Emily; and Reginald left him with full permission to try his fortune.

Reginald found his cousin busied with her housekeeping accounts.

'Emily, will you allow me to interrupt you for a short time?' said Reginald, sitting down by the table.

'Certainly, as soon as I have added up this column. There, that's done.'

'I am going to surprise you, I fear, by what I am about to say.'

A slight flush came into Emily's face.

'I have been with uncle this morning, and have made a confession to him, and which I now want to make to you.'

Emily's heart took alarm, and she only bowed and smiled.

'I am not clever at making speeches, Emily, but what I am about to say comes from my heart. I have long—'

'Stay, Reginald—dear cousin,' said Emily, laying her hand upon his. 'If I guess the purport of what you would say to me, do not say it. We have been like sister and brother to each other for so many years, that it would grieve me greatly to say anything that you might remember as an unkindness. I have a great regard for you —almost a sister's love. Let us remain as we have ever been. Come and go as you have done, always welcome. My father loves you and will care for your future—but I —you understand me, dear cousin?—you will!—you do!'

She pressed his hand, and then, with eyes filled with tears, left the room. Reginald's face became dark with anger. He bit his lips until blood came. He folded his arms and stood erect like one defying Fate.

'Rejected,' he muttered. 'No, not rejected, not even permitted a hearing. And that she calls kindness. I am forestalled by Walter. The well-to-do cousin is preferred to the struggling dependent on her father's bounty. Nothing new!—the old fight—money against poverty. Walter knew he was safe, or he would not have taken matters so coolly. A cur! Why did he not tell me he had been before me? Well, be it as it is; but if he marries her, and I can cross his path, I'll do it.'

With many other evil thoughts and words he left the house, hardly knowing where he went. Traps, the keeper, was standing near the stable with a couple of guns, waiting for orders. He touched his hat as Reginald approached, and was startled at the angry expression of his face.

'Ah, Traps, yes; give me a gun. I'll take a turn through the home wood.'

'Yes, sir. Shall I wait on you, sir?'

'No: I'll go alone. Send Bang.'

'I'm afraid he won't follow you, sir,' said Traps curtly; 'not after the kick you gave him this morning.'

'Who told you I kicked him?' asked Reginald sharply.

'Miss Emily. She sent to me to look at him, thinking he was hurt. So he is.'

'She told you, did she?' asked Reginald. 'Send him here, and if he don't follow, I'll shoot him.'

'That would hardly suit my book, sir, nor yourn neither. I wouldn't take ten guineas for the dog.'

'*You* wouldn't, you old fool?'

'The dog's mine, sir, and if you doubt me, yonder's Miss Emily, and you can ask her.'

Reginald gave a glance in the direction indicated by Traps, and then, almost snatching the flask and shot-belt from Traps, he strode off towards the home wood.

He continued to walk, his gun over his shoulder, looking on the ground, evidently recalling what had passed during the morning. At length he stopped at a gate, and clinching his fist, exclaimed—

'That d—— dog! She saw it and has resented it.'

He did not return to luncheon, but he had a strong will, and by dinner-time had again become master of himself, and laughed and talked as though the present had been the happiest moment of his life.

The next day came as a relief to all. Cousin Emily and her pony-carriage were again in requisition, and Reginald, as though out of bravado, took his seat beside his fair cousin, and chatted as he had done when no shadow had come between them.

When they parted at the station, Reginald was the last to shake hands with Emily.

'Good-bye, fair cousin,' he said; 'I have seen the last of Stanford Hall!'

Tears came into Emily's eyes, but Reginald turned away smiling, and jauntily waving his handkerchief as he *went.*

II.

REGINALD WAINWRIGHT did not keep his word. Some ten months after the visit we have recorded, he heard that his cousin Emily was in London, on a visit to his uncle in Clarges-street. He had so completely estranged himself from Walter that he was not apprised of this visit, as he would otherwise have been, and he only heard of it by accident. He believed himself wronged both by Emily and Walter, as it was hardly a secret that they were now engaged to each other. When he recalled the past, he could remember so many acts upon her part that he had a right to consider justified him in the belief that he was more than indifferent to her, and he could only conclude that he had been trifled with for some sinister purpose of her own—perhaps to draw on Walter to an avowal of his love for her, and which he believed had been made by his wily cousin at the time of their interview in the bedroom. He allowed these impressions to obtain the mastery of his better judgment, his better feelings, until he became restless and vindictive, and there was a proneness in his nature to be dogged and revengeful. Yet his uncle, Emily's father, was his benefactor—the only true friend he had ever known, and he was now about to visit him to claim the fulfilment of the generous promise made two or three years before.

As Stanford Hall was barely distant two miles from the station, Reginald, having only a small valise, determined to walk thither. What a change in his thoughts and feelings since he travelled that road to the Hall, seated beside her that he had loved with all the strength of his passionate nature! There was no doubt of it; the blow he had received had struck upon his heart and numbed it, and old remembrances and associations had no softening *influence upon him.* He had been cast aside for the

richer suitor, for whose advantage he had been used and trifled with.

His visit was unexpected by his uncle, who nevertheless received him with the old welcome.

'What, Regi, my boy! I'm heartily glad to see you!' said the old gentleman; and he looked that he meant what he said. 'Why did you not write, and I would have sent some one to have met you at the station?'

'To say the truth, uncle,' replied Reginald, 'I did not make up my mind to come down until late last night.'

'Well, I am glad to see you, boy. Come into the dining-room; there's a good fire, and lunch will be ready in a few minutes.'

Reginald followed his uncle into the dining-room, where a great fire blazed on the dogs; for though it was only the end of October, the day was chilly, and the warmth was very acceptable.

After a few commonplaces had passed between uncle and nephew, Mr. Mainwaring said:

'Well, now, Regi, I must make a clean breast of it, and then we shall both be more at ease, I take it. I have been distressed—nay, I have been vexed with you for what you have done of late. You have kept away from us—refused to come in September, as you used to do—and this month again, as you used to do, and I think I deserved more consideration.'

'My dear uncle, the moment I heard that you were alone—'

'That's it! that's it, Reginald!' said the uncle, speaking sharply. 'You've made Emily very unhappy, and I think that—unkind of you. It was not because you thought she would suit you for a wife that she should think you would suit her for a husband, and because she stopped you from making a fool of yourself—I don't mean *that—because she* would not let you make a proposal

which she must have declined, you fancy yourself aggrieved, and give us all the pain of knowing so.'

'I have never said as much,' replied Reginald.

'No; but you've acted it. You cut your cousin Walter; you won't come to the Hall. You write regularly to me, it is true; but not as you used to do. There used to be some warmth, something cheery in your letters; but now they are like a mess of cold porridge. I am hurt, Reginald, I am hurt!'

'I am grieved to hear that, dear uncle, but I have been hurt too.'

'Well, and ought to have got over it by this time. Emily is always talking about you. She thinks as I do, that you are very unkind.'

'If she would remember that possibly I had some reason to think I was not so presumptuous—'

'You had no reason, sir! Emily would scorn to play the coquette. She is openness itself! What the devil was she to gain by humbugging you, sir?'

'You are getting angry.'

'No, I am not, sir!'

'You would not call me sir, if you were not. No one can reverence my cousin's character more than I do, and if I have given offence in keeping away from her, it was because I could not bear to contemplate how much I had lost.'

There was some truth in this speech, and some jesuistry; but it had the desired effect. It mollified his uncle.

'Well, well, Regi, we will say no more on this painful subject. Only promise that you will come and spend Christmas as usual, and let us all be friends again.'

'Willingly,' replied Reginald, 'should I—should I be in England.'

'In England?'

'Yes, uncle. Acting upon your promise of assistance, have entered *into* a negotiation for a partnership with

the house of Ellerton and Co., subject to your approval, of course.'

'What do they trade in?'

'Ivory, gold-dust, and produce of that character. I shall have to take charge of their interests at Sierra Leone.'

'Dear me! Very unhealthy place, is it not?'

'No, not very. My predecessor has returned a rich man—fortunes are made there rapidly—after a stay of some five years. I think I can last out that time in any climate,' replied Reginald, smiling.

'Five years are not a long time, certainly,' said Mr. Mainwaring. 'Have you satisfied yourself of the advantages of making this connection?'

'Yes, uncle. They are all set forth in that paper.'

'Oh! here's luncheon. Come, you must be hungry,'—and the reek of a smoking pheasant was not a bad appetiser for a less vigorous eater than Reginald. 'After luncheon you shall have a brush at the pheasants in the home wood, and I will look over this matter.—Davis, tell Traps to be round here with dogs and guns at three o'clock.' And then uncle and nephew devoted their best energies to the agreeable work before them.

Traps was ready with guns and dogs at the time appointed; and though Reginald had fallen a little in his estimation since his assault upon Bang, he was 'main glad' to see him, that he war; and missed him on the two firsts, that he did.'

Bang, however, was not so forgiving, and Reginald, Traps, and his beaters had barely crossed half of the first field when the old dog turned tail, and scampered back to the kennels. A shade came over the face of Reginald at this reproach of the intelligent brute he had assaulted, and he connected, as he had often done before, Emily's rejection in some way with the ebullition of temper which *had made Bang his foe.*

When Reginald returned—having bagged a couple of brace of pheasants—he found that his uncle had mastered the conditions of the proposed partnership.

'The advantages are certainly very great, were it not for the residence abroad in that infernal climate.'

'Without that, uncle, they would not be so great; and I have no fear for myself,' replied Reginald.

'Well, it is your own affair, my boy. Nothing venture nothing have. I will go to town with you to-morrow, as I must give my brother a month's notice of the withdrawal of the three thousand pounds, as he is my banker, you know. May God prosper and preserve you!' said the old man, laying his hand upon his nephew's head.

Reginald was greatly touched by his uncle's generosity and kindness; and had Emily been at the Hall, no doubt but he would have forgiven her all the past—and so ended our story.

After luncheon on the following day Mr. Mainwaring and Reginald left Stanford Hall; Reginald looking on it for the last time, as by the end of next month he was aboard the good ship Enterprise, bound for Sierra Leone.

III.

Two years had passed, and Walter was the husband of Emily. He was also the junior partner in the great house of Elias Mainwaring and Company, of Sago-lane; and he and his charming wife might be seen, with the punctuality of the Horse Guards, driving every morning through Hyde Park, on the way from Kensington to his place of business in the City.

Cedar Lodge, where Mr. and Mrs. Walter Mainwaring resided, was all that could be desired in a home so near London. Not too large for comfort, but with capacity to allow of all the modern luxuries of bath and billiard rooms

and a spacious conservatory. The stabling and out-offices in the rear were models of neatness in their way, and the garden had lawns and noble trees, upon which Addison may have looked from the terrace of Holland House. Within, all was in accordance with a refined taste, which discarded all that was gaudy or meretricious; and Emily proved a most admirable metropolitan housekeeper, for which she had been in part prepared by her Stanford Hall experience.

But London dinners and London society require considerable tact to manage properly, and though the young Mainwarings had not an overwhelming acquaintance, they were called upon not unfrequently to 'entertain.' And then their dinners were charming: abundant, but not profuse, and all the very best of its kind. The conservatory had to yield up some of its treasures, and a parterre of flowers down the centre of the table pleased the eye by the beauty of its colours, whilst the fragrance of the flowers gratified the sense of smell. Their 'evenings' and lawn parties were equally delightful, and were more acceptable from the absence of any appearance of extravagance. Indeed, to quote the much-quoted Thomas Moore, Emily and Walter might have said or sung:

> 'And oh, if there be an Elysium on earth,
> It is this! it is this! it is this!'

Mr. Mainwaring, of Clarges-street, made Cedar Lodge his Sunday lounge after church (which he never attended) in the summer time, and once or twice in the winter he would take his dinner there. Not so Mr. Ralph Mainwaring, Emily's father. He had sold Stanford Hall in order to be nearer his children—besides, what would the old house have been without Emily? There were no associations about it to bind him to mere walls and trees, as it had come to him by purchase, and so he sold it to good *advantage*, to an opulent advertiser in want of a ''All,' and

invested the money received for it, as a matter of course, in the house of Elias Mainwaring and Company. Without being a bore, he was a frequent visitor at the Cedars, and thus continued to have some share of the society of his beloved Emily.

One blessing, however, was thought to be wanting to make the happiness of Walter and Emily. They were childless, and they sometimes murmured that this blessing was withheld.

This happy condition of affairs had continued for more than four years, and many were found to envy the occupants of the pretty green brougham which passed so regularly through the Park. News came frequently from Reginald to his uncle; and though he had had to battle with sickness and fever, he was in no way dissatisfied with the course he had adopted.

There was a tempest near at hand, that was to be felt in the remotest parts of the kingdom, and over seas, and in other lands than ours.

Walter returned one day with a serious face—so serious that Emily questioned him as to the cause.

'Why, darling, there is bad news in the City. A house that exercises great influence on other houses is rumoured to be shaky.'

'I am very sorry to hear it. Will it affect you, dear?'

'My father says not in the least; but Macpherson, our chief clerk, and I think that no one can tell where the mischief would end should the big house fail. But we will talk of something else, as my head is confused with thinking and debating this subject.'

But Walter could not think of anything else, although he talked of many matters. He tried to read, but the writer's thoughts were not his thoughts—they were in the City.

The early *Times*, on the day after the next, must have brought dismay and despair to many a household. The

great house in the City had closed its doors, and smaller houses had collapsed in consequence. Walter had heard that such a catastrophe was imminent before he left the City, and had passed a feverish restless night. He ordered the brougham half an hour earlier than usual, and would have prevented Emily accompanying him as was her wont, but she would not be denied. They scarcely spoke, and when Emily did so, it was to beg of him to have courage, and not give trouble welcome by meeting it half-way. She kissed him and said softly, 'Remember, I love you!' There was a momentary comfort in those few words, but their influence was destroyed when Walter entered the counting-house.

'There's a panic in the City, sir, a perfect panic!' said Macpherson, without making or waiting for the usual morning salutations.

'A panic in the City!' a cry almost as dreadful as that of 'fire!' in a crowded ship.

What does that word panic convey to us? Merchant-princes, proud of their commercial honour—proud of their worldly places—humbled and toppled down as it were by a whirlwind. Speculations that promised fortunes crumbled into atoms, and those that trusted to them well-nigh mad with ruin. Broken homes, and all that those two short words imply. Gentle women, matrons and maidens, tenderly nurtured, whose lives had been lives of ease and refined enjoyment, suddenly deprived of all that ministered to their wants, and the world at its worst before them; for none but those who have had the bitter experience know how difficult the task, how hard the sacrifice of retrenchment, even when there has been neither waste nor extravagance. Many a high-spirited youth, who had looked forward to a future of liberal employment, compelled to turn aside and accept the drudgery of servitude. Worthy men, who had worn out their lives in honourable service, and had thought in the winter of their age to be

considered by those they had benefited by their labours, —hopeless now! All buried in the ruins of the house! More broken homes! more household gods cast into the mire! Thousands whose slender means made existence tolerable deprived of all by the wreck of those in whom they had confided. How many droop and die, none can tell—none.

But why pursue these painful details? Christmas should be a merry season, and we would not willingly detract from its cheerfulness.

A fortnight had passed, and Walter returned earlier than usual.

'I have come home, Emily,' he said, 'that I may myself tell you the worst before it happens. Despite every effort we have made, our house must succumb to this terrible storm, and to-morrow our ruin will be known.'

'My dear Walter!'

'It is a terrible blow; but I am more at ease now that I know our fate is inevitable. What grieves me most is that your dear confiding father will share our ruin. My poor father, always sanguine and generally successful, has speculated largely; and two or three schemes in which we had invested largely are broken up, and, so far as I can see, we cannot nearly meet our engagements.'

'And your father?'

'Is perfectly overwhelmed. He seems deprived of all power of reflection or of action. I should not have left him, but your dear father has promised to remain with him. Dear, generous man! Not one word of reproach; not a moment's hesitation in applying all he was worth to stay our downfall. But too late! Too late!'

Such consolation as occurred to her Emily offered her husband, and she was made comparatively happy when she saw him fall into a calm sleep, to which he had been a stranger for many nights, and which lasted long into *the morning.*

Elias Mainwaring and Company were declared to be bankrupt; and the day before their names were to appear in the *Gazette*, Walter took Emily to her father, as he knew that as soon as the *fiat* was issued there would be some one to take possession of Cedar Lodge. He did not remove anything from the house except some wearing apparel and a miniature of Emily and a portrait of her mother; these *lares* he considered were too sacred to be chaffered for by dirty brokers. And then the Elysium was deserted.

Early on the afternoon of the following day, Walter was on his way to Clarges-street, when, passing through Leicester-square, he stopped to look in at a shop-window. He knew not why he did so, but we do many strange things unconsciously when we are in sorrow. He was gazing vacantly at some books with gaudy bindings, when a man similarly occupied, and standing near him, suddenly looked round and exclaimed:

'Walter! Walter Mainwaring!'

He was half dazed, and failed to recognise the speaker —the more so as he was bronzed and bearded.

'Not know me, Walter?' asked the man. 'Is cousin Reginald quite forgotton?'

'Reginald! This is indeed an unexpected meeting!' replied Walter.

'On both sides,' said Reginald, 'for I only landed this morning, and have not as yet reported myself.'

'Then you have not heard of our misfortunes?' asked Walter, one subject being uppermost in his mind.

'Misfortunes? No. But you look pale—ill. Let us go to the *café* at the corner, where I have ordered dinner, and came out for a stroll whilst it was getting ready.'

Walter made no resistance as Reginald placed his arm in his and led the way to the *café*.

When they were seated, Walter told Reginald all that *had happened*—how loss had followed loss during this ter-

rible panic, until the house of Mainwaring and Company had fallen also.

Reginald would have been a harder man than his long residence abroad, and the sensual life he had led there, should have made him had he been able to have listened unmoved; and he either affected to be touched, or he was really so, by what Walter told him. But he declined to accompany his cousin to Clarges-street when Walter rose to go there, after pleading a want of appetite as an excuse for not accepting Reginald's invitation to dinner.

'Shall you be in the City to-morrow?' asked Reginald.

'Yes; and for many days, I expect. There will be much to see to,' replied Walter. 'Good-bye—I wish I could have welcomed you home with better news!' And so they parted.

Reginald lingered long over his dinner, and drank freely of champagne. He was evidently busy with thoughts that troubled him.

Walter saw nothing more of him for some days, and not until Cedar Lodge had been advertised for sale under the bankruptcy.

Walter was engaged with Mr. Macpherson in his private counting-house arranging deeds and papers, when Reginald was announced.

Mr. Macpherson rose to leave the room, but Reginald stopped him. 'Don't go, Mr. Macpherson; how do you do?—haven't forgotten me, I hope, as my cousin had? Well, Walter, how are you?'

'As well as I can hope to be,' replied Walter. 'Such business as I am now engaged upon is neither conducive to health nor spirits.'

'Well, when things are at their worst they must mend, folk say. I have been down to see the place at Kensington. Nice place—charmingly done up. I have called to know whether it must go to the hammer, or whether it *can be had by private* contract.'

'I believe the Court can dispose of the property by valuation,' replied Walter, colouring deeply. 'It would be something to save it from those brutes the brokers.'

'Well, we'll see,' said Reginald curtly. 'Sad affair this, Macpherson. Plenty to keep you company, however. Well—good-day, Walter; I see you are busy. Good-day, Macpherson; something will turn up, I've no doubt, when all this is settled.' And so saying he walked out, whistling as he went, but not from want of thought.

The failure of Mainwaring and Company had not left its unfortunate representatives without friends. In less than twelve months Walter was engaged at a liberal salary in a house of repute. His father had never recovered the shock of his bankruptcy, and was content to wear out the day in futile calculations as to the cause of his ruin. Mrs. Mainwaring had a settlement from her father of some five hundred a year, and the family was placed therefore beyond the reach of want. Walter had a small house at Holloway, and though it might have been put into the conservatory of Cedar Lodge, it was yet made sufficient by the love and contentedness to be found within. Emily did not accompany her husband to the City as heretofore in a brougham, but she walked with him to the end of the road and saw him mount the omnibus, and met him again on his return. Mr. Ralph Mainwaring had lodgings near them, and managed wonderfully well on an annuity of 150*l.*, which had escaped the wreck in Sago-lane.

Cedar Lodge and its belongings had been purchased by Reginald, who, more than once, had invited Walter and Emily to visit him in their old home. But it required more resolution than either possessed at the time to look upon the scene of the happiness they had known, and the *invitations* were declined. But as time wore on Emily and *Walter upbraided themselves* for this weakness, and felt

that it betrayed an unthankfulness for the good that was still about them, and the next invitation was accepted.

As truthful chroniclers, it must be confessed that the old happy home was not revisited without some pain—some regrets. It would have been strange had it been otherwise. Reginald received them with a great show of kindness.

'I am glad you have come at last. You will find little altered; all was so perfect,' he said, leading the way to the drawing-room.

Emily was struck to see how all the old arrangements had been preserved; every ornament in its accustomed place; almost the same flowers in the window-stands. One object, however, was wanted, and marked the change of proprietor—her pet canary! No, he had shared her expulsion.

After luncheon Walter went to call on a lady who had been very kind when the great trouble came, and Emily proposed to look through the conservatory, whose treasures had mostly been nurtured by her hands. As she was about to leave the room, Reginald said,

'Stay a moment, Emily; I want to speak with you.'

Emily looked somewhat surprised.

'I saw,' he continued, 'that your quick eye noticed that you had been present here, though absent. It is true I have disturbed nothing. Eight years ago you sent me into exile.'

'I, Reginald?'

'Yes, you—you rejected my love, and—as I still believe—because I was a poorer man than Walter. I am not so now, Emily. I know that you loved me better than you loved Walter. I never have lost that conviction. I remember a hundred evidences of it. You married the richer man.'

'I married Walter because I loved him,' said Emily *warmly.*

'I do. not believe that your love was all with him—I cannot, will not believe it. You see how I have thought of you; here is a home worthy of you; it is yours whenever you like to claim it.'

'God forgive you, Reginald, if I understand you—God forgive me if I misinterpret your meaning;' and she went towards the door.

'Hear me to an end,' said Reginald, his face becoming dark again as it did at Stanford Hall. 'Hear me to an end. I said this house was yours whenever you like to claim it—which implies a condition which I did not care to name to you—when your husband can buy it of me!'

'I am glad that such conditions were in your mind,' said Emily. 'With your permission, I will visit my old favourites.'

So saying, she went to the conservatory, thinking again and again of the strange scene just enacted.

Reginald bit his lip, and then giving vent to a bold round oath, opened a glass door that led into the garden.

Reginald had met his first great disappointment in life like a fool and a coward. Cut adrift, as it were, from his first love, he had allowed himself to be tossed about on a sea of passions, drifting where the wind listed, and never seeking to find a haven of rest. Abroad, his sensualities were hardly observed, and since his return to England he had kept so much apart from his family connection, that his movements had been unknown. His mind had become so gross that he doubted the existence of virtue.

When Walter came back, Emily expressed her wish to return home, pleading the distance they had to go and the shortness of the daylight as an excuse for leaving. Reginald made but slight effort to detain his visitors, and parting with them seemingly the best friends, Walter and his wife once more bade good-bye to Cedar Lodge. All that had passed between herself and Reginald Emily wisely kept as a secret which had better have but one

keeper. Emily's father was greatly disappointed at the result of this visit. The simple-hearted old man had thought that Reginald would have made some presentation to Emily—such as the piano, or some of the books.

'He's a shabby fellow, a very shabby fellow. After all the kindness he has received at her hands, he might have made some recognition of it.'

'But has he not forgotten you, dear?' replied Emily.

'Ah, yes; that's nothing. Mine was a free gift, and he has made good use of it. I've nothing to say: I'm content with what I have.' But the old gentleman had thought of what he had done for the orphan boy, and felt keenly his desertion in the time of tribulation, now happily passed away.

'Turn on, Old Time,' as we must hasten to an end. In two months more Christmas was coming, and Emily had decked her pretty, small—very small, we must own—drawing-room and dining-room with the cheerful red-berried holly and other greenery, although her opposite neighbour, who came home on the same 'bus as Walter, had declared it to be vulgar, exceedingly. Nevertheless, Emily knew her dear old father loved to see such Christmas emblems about the house, and Walter was not 'genteel,' neither was she, and so holly and mistletoe and bright bay leaves were liberally distributed in 'parlour and kitchen and hall.'

It was Christmas-eve, and Walter had arranged to bring home one of the clerks with him to make merry. And Walter's sister Laura, who really was a nice girl, and had met the family troubles like a saint (so said her mother), had already arrived, and so had papa, who was busy in the little pantry brewing gin punch, the secret of which he had had from a great author, whose brewage was known to be superexcellent.

Emily was too busy making her preparations to think

of Walter and his 'bus; and Laura, too, was decking with winter flowers the dishes of tarts and other delicacies—all home-made and wholesome.

'There's Walter,' said Emily, as the street-door was heard to open. 'I had no idea it was so late.'

'Emily!' called Walter, from the top of the kitchen stairs, 'come up, dear; I want to introduce you to some friends.'

'Can't, Walter,' was the reply; 'I'm in the middle of my tipsy-cake. You and papa must do the honours for the present.' And when she had finished her 'household cares' for a time, and presented herself in the small drawing-room, she was surprised to find an unexpected visitor—Reginald Wainwright.

'I found Reginald in the City, as I was leaving the office; and as he had no engagement, he has come on to spend Christmas-eve with us,' said Walter.

What could Emily say but that she was glad to see him? though she almost expected to find a blister on her tongue for telling such a story.

If Emily had needed any extra stimulus to exertion to make her little 'At Home' a jovial one, it would have been found in the presence of Reginald. He had come, she fancied, to spy the nakedness of the land, and she was resolved he should find it flowing with milk and honey. The good spirits she displayed became infectious, and a merrier party keeping Christmas-eve could not have been found in Christendom. The dainty supper was highly applauded, the gin punch extolled immensely—nor did the ladies refuse to sip the subtle compound. Laura could not sing at first without a piano; but when Emily had trilled forth an old ballad that all (the junior clerk excepted) remembered to have heard long ago, she thought she would venture, and really sang very sweetly. The only one whose mirth did not appear to be real was Reginald, and at times he might have been seen

'taking stock,' as it were, of the little room, where the hand of taste was as visible as it had been at Cedar Lodge. At times he fixed his eyes on the bright happy face that

ever and anon regarded Walter with a look of ineffable love that could not be mistaken, even by the man who had hardened his heart with vice and selfishness.

The party broke up as the neighbouring church clock struck eleven. Reginald offered to see Mr. Mainwaring to his lodgings, but the junior clerk had already undertaken that duty, having had a bed engaged for him close by. As the guests departed Reginald offered his hand to Emily, which she accepted.

'Good-night, Emily,' he murmured rather than spoke; 'I see you do not covet Cedar Lodge.'

'No!' replied Emily emphatically; 'good-night.'

There are good angels abroad on Christmas-eve—the same perhaps that watched over the stable at Bethlehem. Such is our belief; and one stood by Reginald's pillow that night, or, debauchee that he was, he would hardly have thought that, where honest hearty love and pure lives were to be found together, it required very little money to make an abode for peace. He thought also that a good man, such as he knew his uncle to be, could bear reverses with a patient resignation, and look forward to the great change with that hope which robs death of its terrors. He thought of the fret and fever of his own life —of the 'Dead Sea fruit' to which it had turned, and what must be the ending. Old teachings of good came back to him, and though he strove to chase them from his thoughts, they would return again and again. He recalled the incidents of the past evening, of Emily's loving regard of Walter, answered so eloquently though silently by her husband, who

'Looked his love into his lady's face.'

He could no longer doubt that they were One in all things, in life, in death.

These reflections came back to him so often during the following days, that his old habits became distasteful to him, and after a time the good angels were heard with love and reverence.

The first good result which came from this happy change was a proper consideration for the reverses in his uncle's fortunes. Uncle Ralph was surprised one morning at receiving a letter from Reginald, stating that he had transferred to his account at the Bank of England three thousand pounds, with nine years' interest thereon. This tardy act of common justice (he said) would have been made earlier but for the unsettled state of his affairs, which had only taken a favourable turn on Christmas-eve.

Mr. Mainwaring felt himself quite at liberty to accept of this voluntary restitution, as it enabled him to find a partnership for Walter, and to add to the comfort of his child by removing some of those anxious fears for the future which must always beset the struggler with fortune.

So ends our story, and may all good angels have us in their keeping this Christmas time.

HOW I LOST MY WHISKERS.

CHAPTER I.

'Do you object to smoking, sir?'

This I asked in my blandest manner of an old gentleman who sat, with his face hidden by a newspaper, opposite to me in a railway carriage.

All the seats in the carriage were filled; I and four others were on our way from Cambridge to enjoy the Christmas vacation. Our spirits were high, for there is a delight in banishing for a time all thoughts of conic sections, Newton's *Principia*, and the little-go, and entertaining, in exchange, visions of 'hops,' skating parties, and all the orgies which every right-minded family hold at this season in honour of King Christmas.

But I must introduce you to my chums, for chums we were, although our tastes did not all lie in the same direction. Jack Stirrup is (or rather was at that period) a riding and hunting man, and was not unfrequently to be seen at Newmarket; Stretcher, on the other hand, loved boating, and preferred the sight of a well-developed biceps to that of the best bred hunter, and would often remark to Jack, 'How on earth you can say that you would rather see the "Two Thousand" than the "Time-race" in the "Colquhoun Sculls," I cannot for the life of me make out.' Edwards was a poor and reading man, but whose wit and talents rendered him a universal favourite; whilst Davies was a rich, open-handed, good-hearted fellow as ever lived. For my own part, I do not think I had any well-defined peculiarity, but did a little of everything. I read a little, rowed a little, hunted a little, had a fair income—in short, if I had any characteristic at all, it was a love of laziness and practical jokes.

We congratulated ourselves in getting a carriage to ourselves (with the exception of the old gentleman I have named), for we intended to keep out the cold and beguile our journey with sundry pipes and cigars. We had our cases out, and were preparing to light up, as a matter of course, when we were astonished by my *vis-à-vis* dashing away the newspaper which had hidden his face.

'Do I object to smoking? Yes, sir, I do object! I object very *strongly, sir*! and beg that you will instantly

replace your cigars in your pockets. I insist on having no smoking in this carriage!'

We looked aghast at this sudden burst of old-gentlemanly wrath.

'Might I ask if you intend travelling far on this line, sir?' inquired Edwards, in his comically-polite tone.

'What is that to you, sir? What business is it of yours where I am going to?'

'I merely wished to suggest, in case of your travelling far, that, pleasing and delightful as it would be for us to enjoy your agreeable society, yet, nevertheless, we would try to bear the loss, should you prefer to change carriages at the next station.'

'No doubt you would wish to get rid of me; but no, sir! I do not move my seat, and the first one that smokes I report to the guard.'

'In that case, I fear we shall be obliged, painful though it be, to tear ourselves away,' I said, as we drew up at a small station.

Fortunately we found the next compartment empty, and as we started again we pulled out our cigar-cases, this time to light their contents.

'The old boy has certainly got out of bed the wrong side this morning,' said I, puffing away.

'Or has made a mistake in his betting-book,' remarked my sporting friend. 'We'll give him a benefit now, at any rate; I vote we take it in turns to puff smoke through the lamp-hole. Let's look at him; ha! cooled down a little, is about to compose himself to sleep. I'll trouble you for his nightcap; come and look at it, Fred.'

I did so, and roared on seeing a red woven cap of conical shape, which added very considerably to the irascity of the wearer's features.

With perseverance which deserved a better cause, we each made a tube of paper, and putting the end through *the lamp-hole, took* our turn at 'smoking him out;' and

I blush as I now think how heartily we enjoyed the enraged state in which he paced up and down the empty carriage, like a caged tiger.

The next time we stopped, however, the guard put his head into our carriage window and said, with a wink—

'Gentl'm in next compartment complains of your smoking, sir.'

'Smoking!' we exclaimed, with mock indignation. 'Do we look as though we'd been smoking? What nonsense!' and added in a mysterious manner, 'You see there's one vacant seat; of course we're not going to tell tales of the man who occupied that.'

'All right!' said the guard, laughing; 'I wasn't born yesterday;' and after a slightly confidential transaction of a pecuniary nature, left us in peace.

The snow, which had been falling heavily all day, now lay thick all around. Our eyes ached again, as we looked out of the window (which was itself all frosted over) on to the dazzling snow, which covered all the landscape; and as we stamped our feet on the floor of the carriage, we began heartily to wish ourselves at our journey's end, and by the fireside.

* * * * *

'Halloa! what are we stopping for now? I wonder whether we're going to do an upset, or anything exciting of that kind,' said Davies, looking out of the window. 'I don't see a train anywhere that we can have a friendly collision with.'

'Get out here, gentlemen,' said the guard, passing the window; 'the line is snowed up, and we shall have to wait till it is clear.'

The grumbling which this pleasant announcement caused was immediately stopped by our hearing the voice of our disagreeable companion in the next compartment.

'Line snowed up, is it?' said that gentleman, trying to appear calm in his fury, 'and we get out here? Oh! and do you suppose I am quietly going to submit to this? The line ought to have been cleared ready for us. I shall shall bring an action.'

'But, sir,' I said, 'how on earth could they—'

'Might I request to know who spoke to you, sir? I consider your remark and interference excessive impertinence.'

This was a little too bad, and I turned to Jack and whispered that we would devise some plan of giving our friend a lesson demonstrative of the evils attending bad temper at Christmas time.

We were fortunately stopped at a distance of only two hundred yards from a station; but a very poor station it was, without any waiting-room or refreshment-rooms.

The station-master, who was a pleasant sort of fellow, said we should have to wait but a couple of hours, and gave us a room, where we made the best of a bad job, and having sent for some beer from the nearest 'public,' became, as Edwards mathematically observed, approximately happy. The old gentleman, however, had not yet vented all his wrath, but kept on anathematising the snow and the railway people at intervals. After we had warmed ourselves, Stretcher proposed that we should have some songs; but as no one volunteered, I suggested that we should get on our way sooner if we went out and helped to clear away the snow from the line. To this all agreed (with the exception of our amiable friend, of course).

We had worked away merrily for about an hour, and were congratulating ourselves on being able to start again, when Jack came running up with a very pleased expression of countenance, and as he tapped me on the shoulder, I remembered that he had not been with us for the last half-hour.

'Fred,' he said, 'I've an idea.'

'Keep it then,' I replied, 'for it is so rare a commodity with you, that I would not deprive you of it for the world.'

'Don't chaff, and I'll tell you all about it. I went up into the room at the station just now, and found our friend, the old boy, fast asleep in his chair, completely collapsed under the soporific effects of the fire and a glass of brandy-and-water. I immediately ran into the village and bought these,' he said, showing me a handful of screws, a gimblet, and a screwdriver.

'What in the name of everything ridiculous do you want these for?' I asked.

'Don't you see? we shall be able to start again directly, now that the line is clear; we meanwhile run upstairs, and screw the old gentleman firmly into the room—the train goes on—we are revenged for his surly behaviour to us, and he will then learn that "old gentlemen should not be ill-tempered at Christmas time."'

'Capital!' I said, always ready to fall in with a practical joke; 'let us be off at once.'

We certainly found the old gentleman in as Morphean a torpor as we could wish. His feet were propped up on a chair, whilst his boots were drying, and he was breathing with his mouth wide open, in a rather apoplectic manner.

'Shall I put a snowball into each of his boots?' I said.

'No! that would be too much of a good thing, but I'll tell you what you shall do; you're rather a swell at drawing, aren't you? I'll just burn the end of that beer-bottle cork, and you shall artistically adorn his face.'

'That is splendid,' he whispered, as I finished off with giving the old gentleman a moustache, which turned up in a facetious manner. 'Just move that looking-glass, and put it so that he may admire himself directly he wakes; and now let us be off.'

We walked on tiptoe to the door. The hinges began to creak; and cold as the weather was, a faint perspiration began to develop itself on my forehead, as I noticed

the old gentleman move in his chair; it was, however, only to turn his head on to the other shoulder, and we closed the door in safety.

'Give me the screws, quick,' I said, 'and go to the bottom of the stairs and prevent any one coming up.'

I bored hole after hole as noiselessly as I could, and having made the door as fast as eight good screws would make it, I ran down-stairs and whispered 'All right!'

'Is there a gentleman up-stairs, sir?' said the station-master, walking towards us. 'He asked me to wake him in time for the train, and it is just ready to go.'

'Oh! he won't like to be disturbed till the last moment, you may be sure,' said Jack. 'By the bye, I wished to talk to you of a plan by which I think your station might be much improved.'

Now architecture happened to be one of the station-master's hobbies, and they were soon deep in discussion. I beat a hasty retreat to the guard, and producing a sovereign, said—

'If you get us off in five minutes from now, waiting for no one, and ring your bell at the very last minute, this is yours.'

'All right, sir! the luggage is all in, and most of the passengers. Take your seats. Going on!' he shouted, whilst I stood with my watch in hand.

'One minute left! Ring the bell now!' I said. 'If they undo those screws in one, or even five minutes, I'll eat them.'

We jumped into a carriage, the guard gave the final whistle, and the train moved slowly on. We anxiously watched the result of our plot, with our heads out of window. After waiting one or two minutes, we noticed a figure gesticulating at the station window. The train then passed into a deep cutting, and we lost sight of it.

CHAPTER II.

I THINK I have forgotten to say that I was going to spend the Christmas with a college friend. He had gone down a few days before, and had promised to meet me at C— station.

You may imagine that I was not sorry to find myself arrived there, nor yet to see my friend Tom stamping his feet on the platform, no doubt thoroughly tired of waiting for the train. As he drove me up, he began talking of the different arrangements he had made for our mutual amusement. 'To-morrow,' he said, 'I've set aside for a skating party; I have had the pond in the park swept, and invited all "les jeunes demoiselles" within reach, and as they have all accepted, it will give you a very fair idea of our "native" beauty.'

Now, of all jolly things in the world, I think a skating party is the jolliest. Tom says that I am fond of showing my skating off; but I deny that this has anything to do with it. In the first place, the frosty weather (and the mulled claret) induce high spirits; then there are the tumbles to laugh at, and the ladies' skates to strap on (which last, in my own mind, is not the least pleasant part of the entertainment).

We had by this time reached the house, and after having accomplished our toilettes, Tom took me into the drawing-room.

'The guv'nor isn't at home; but let me introduce you to my sister Minnie.'

Miss Minnie rose, and held out her hand at once, but, for my own part, I was too dumfounded to utter a single word. I am told that I am far from eloquent when describing female beauty, so I will not attempt it here; but I must say that I had never, and have never since, seen such a pretty and merry face. When dinner was an-

nounced, however, I had recovered my equanimity sufficiently to offer her my arm, and after a short time we got to know one another thoroughly.

The dinner (perhaps it *may* have been the port-wine) had opened my heart, and when we removed to Tom's sanctum to smoke (where, by the bye, Miss Minnie insisted on joining us, saying that she 'liked the smell of tobacco, and found it so dull by herself'), I began to relate my adventures with the old gentleman.

Peal after peal of laughter arose as I proceeded with my narrative. I warmed with my subject, quite outdoing myself in the description of the old gentleman's angry face and his irate behaviour.

'Here!' I said, in triumph, 'is my trophy!'—and I held out the nightcap.

Never shall I forget that moment—brother and sister stared at it for one second, and then Tom, looking vacantly at me, immediately went into an hysterical fit of laughter. His face began to grow quite black, and the tears rolled down his cheeks.

My face presented anything but a laughing appearance, for I was struck with amazement at this behaviour. At last, with what little breath he had left, he managed to get out the words—

'It's—the—guv—nor's—night—cap!'

As he said this he pointed to a small label inside the cap, which I had not noticed before, and there, sure enough, were the words

T. Grumblethorp, Esq.,
Grumblethorp Hall.

Reader, have you ever wished the earth to open and swallow you up? How heartily did I wish it at that moment! I saw the whole affair at a glance;—I had been playing a practical joke upon the gentleman in whose house I was sitting, and had been describing him in the *most ridiculous light* to his daughter. How I hated

KEENE.]

HOW I LOST MY WHISKERS.

Tom for laughing (his sister was nearly as bad, by the way), whilst I sat turning alternately red and pale, considering what on earth was to be done. At this moment a servant entered the room.

'A telegram for Miss Grumblethorp.'

She hastily looked over it, and then read it aloud to us:

'Shall come by the 8.30 to-morrow morning. Some young jackanapes have played a practical joke, and caused me to miss the last train to-night.'

At last I found words. 'Tom,' I said, 'I must fly. Miss Grumblethorp, I cannot sufficiently apologise to you for—'

'Oh, you need not apologise to me, nor must you go either. Tom, you must devise some escape out of the dilemma.'

'It would certainly never do for the governor to recognise you; he'd never forgive you, and would cut me off with a shilling. Oh! I have it; I sentence you, in punishment, to cut off those whiskers and moustache. He'll never know you then.'

'Never!' I said, with determination. 'I'm not a vain man, but I will never voluntarily make a fright of myself.'

'Oh, I'm sure you'd look much better without them,' said Miss Grumblethorp; 'besides, remember the skating party to-morrow; I want you to teach me *so* much. You really must not go.'

I was not proof against this. The adorable Miss Minnie actually wishing me to stay! Again, I recollected that I had no other invitation for Christmas, and all my family were spending the winter abroad. Under these circumstances, I determined to risk all, and stay where I was sure to enjoy myself.

Next morning I rose early, had a 'clean shave,' and borrowed a pair of light-blue spectacles. When I met Miss Grumblethorp on my way to breakfast, she declared

the disguise was capital, telling me at the same time that her father had arrived, and was in the breakfast-room. I was formally introduced, and by the way that he received me it was evident he had not recognised me in the least.

'Always glad to see Tom's friends,' said the old boy, in quite a cheerful tone. 'Thank goodness he doesn't choose for companions such puppies as those who insulted me yesterday. I wonder whether they consider themselves gentlemen?'

In this strain he continued to talk all breakfast-time, whilst I answered with perfect gravity, not daring to look at Minnie, for I felt sure she was enjoying the joke.

My story is nearly over. I enjoyed the skating party thoroughly, for I spent most of the day in teaching Minnie. I also accompanied her the next evening to a ball, where I found she could move much more quickly and gracefully than on the ice.

* * * * *

I am now married; and though I have since grown my whiskers, yet my father-in-law has never suspected that I was 'the young jackanapes that made him late for the train' (he has never mentioned the burnt-cork business), and has always been so kind to me that I have heartily repented of it.

MERRY GAMES FOR CHRISTMAS TIME.

EVEN if we had not been told by a higher authority that, To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven; A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;—if the maxim had not been consecrated by ages, forming part of the golden old-world wisdom, it would still be pressed upon our acceptance by a perusal of the almanac, as well as by our observation, if not by our proper experience, of the daily events of human life.

For all Christendom there are days and seasons (as Good Friday and Lent), when, without being bigoted or *superstitious—although* cheerful thankfulness is allowable,

nay, praiseworthy—excessive merriment is most inopportune. For most individuals past their early youth—for many, unfortunately, still in early youth—there are sad anniversaries on which mirth shocks the feeling heart; when it avoids the world's bustle, seeking the shade, for retirement and searching self-examination. Without being altogether plunged in grief, it is in the mood of 'Il Penseroso:'

'There, in close covert, by some brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from day's garish eye,
While the bee, with honey'd thigh,
At her flowery work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring.
Or if the air will not permit,
Some still, removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth.'

But there are also birthdays, wedding-days, days of rescue from peril—grateful remembrances of escape from railway collision, shipwreck, disease, struggles with beasts of prey (whether quadruped or human), and other shocks which flesh is heir to. There are thanksgiving days for signal good fortune, happy restorations, or even mere bare justice done; when the very mourner lays aside his tokens of bereavement, and wears a smile, at least for the sake of others. 'L'Allegro' is in the ascendant:

'Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful jollity,
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides;
Come, and trip it as you go
On the light fantastic toe,
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty.'

Similarly, what people is not bound, as a society, to rejoice on the recurrence of Easter, Whitsuntide, and *Christmas time?* Holidays may remain holy days, with-

out suppressing a whit of their gaiety. There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing. Now is the time to speak out cheerily, to shake hands and embrace—observing the strictest punctilio—with hearty goodwill and friendliness.

It is a time for four-o'clock dinners and pantomime-going; for evening parties and hops (not balls), with stand-up suppers, snapdragon, private lotteries with all prizes, and juvenile dramatic efforts: to vary which, and call forth the 'nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles' enshrined in Milton's immortal verse, we will resuscitate a few of the quips and cranks known to our childhood as Christmas games. All they need, to carry them out successfully, is a room or two neither too spacious nor too fragile-furnitured, and thorough good-nature on the part of the performers.

Christmas games are based on the grand fundamental theory of being, like Falstaff, amusing in themselves, and in calling forth after-amusement as their consequence. They make you laugh while bringing in forfeits, which will probably make you laugh still more. What would a Christmas game without forfeits be, but soup without salt, plum-pudding without plums, Cupid without his bow and arrows, a fiddler or a drummer without his drum or fiddlesticks? Blindman's Buff is no exception, because the forfeit is exacted on the spot. The blind man takes his toll in ready-money. 'One bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,' is applicable to flounced, flowered, and furbelowed as well as to feathered bipeds.

Forfeits, then, there *must* be, enough and to spare. If they come in slowly by the more serious (so to speak) and orthodox games, they must be had by readier, looser, less dignified methods; because it is not to a Quakers' meeting that the light-hearted guests have been invited. *The queen of the* evening *must* maintain her revenue of

fun, and has a right to levy forfeit-taxes according to her own good pleasure. Even if she resort to Nip-Nose I shall not grumble, provided that a pretty hand nip mine. Having mentioned which, we may as well have done with it. It is as good an overture as any other to our harmonious performance of concerted pieces.

The party, seated in a circle, ladies and gentlemen alternately, as far as may be, each gently takes successively the tip of his or her neighbour's nose between his

or her finger and thumb. While doing this the parties concerned interrogate each other with absurd questions or indulge in ridiculous remarks. As all are bound to keep their countenance, under pain of fine, and perhaps eventual imprisonment, the object is to make your neighbour laugh. Whoever laughs pays a forfeit. It need not be a downright horse laugh; a broad grin or a giggle suffices to incur the penalty.

Be careful not to soil the tips of your finger and

thumb with burnt cork, carmine, or other colouring matter, before applying them to your neighbour's nose. But, if you do, pray don't, for the world, tell anybody that I put you up to it. Still less will you tinge your own nose with any hue not natural to it before presenting it to be nipped. It might make your fair neighbour laugh, and so expose her to the payment of a forfeit, besides causing her to convey with her fingers the pigment to *her* neighbour's nose. Oh, no! you would never think of such a thing! Its name is 'Never-Known.'

Another mode of collecting forfeits in plenty in a very short time is the Game of Tapes. It plays, in a measure, on the same confusion of ideas which renders a 'losing game' of draughts so perplexing at first. Each person holds a piece of tape by one end. The other ends are grasped, like so many single reins, in the hands of the leader of the game, whose place is consequently in the centre of the ring. When he calls out 'Loose!' everybody must tighten his tape; when he gives the word of command, 'Tight!' each must slacken it. It is an experiment on the Rule of Contraries, showing how much we are the creatures of habit. A forfeit is exacted from every person who literally obeys the word of command.

For Fly, Feather, fly! ten or twelve young people sit in a circle as close together as they can get, without crowding. Somebody takes a tuft of cotton wool, or a downy feather, and lets it float in the air above the heads of the group, giving it a puff with his breath. The person towards whom it directs its descent must likewise blow it upwards and away. If it falls upon him he pays a forfeit. A dozen persons so employed in chasing with their breath the common enemy compose a most amusing group, resembling the messengers of Æolus, as represented in old mythological pictures. The feather often defies them

bravely, challenging them to do their worst, with poor King Lear's world-famous taunt—

'Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks; rage, blow!'

Each person thus exhibits his own private and peculiar mode of giving a puff. It occasionally happens that, as it is hard to laugh and blow at the same time, the feather finds its way into the mouth of the intending blower. Of course the involuntary feather-eater pays a double forfeit as the penalty of his curious taste.

Blindman's Buff may be played with a wand, which relieves it of the objection of a tendency to romp. The blind man, with a long wand in his hand, is placed in the middle of the room. The players stand round him in a ring, hand in hand, singing a chorus. They suddenly cease, and as soon as they are silent, the blind man stretches out his wand till it touches somebody, who is obliged to take hold of it by the end. The blind man utters three cries, which the person holding the wand must imitate. If recognised by the voice, he must pay a forfeit, and likewise take the blind man's place.

Whose Shadow am I? Guess if you can, is almost an artistic game. The Guesser (chosen by lot) in this has no bandage on his eyes, but he need have all his wits about him. A white sheet is stretched on a screen, exactly as for a magic lantern. The Guesser is made to sit facing the screen on a stool so low that his shadow will not fall upon it. At a suitable distance behind him, a single waxlight is placed on a table or stand, and all the other lights are extinguished. When everything is ready, the company form a sort of procession, passing one after the other in Indian file between the Guesser (who is strictly forbidden to turn his head) and the table on which the waxlight stands. The consequence of which is that each person's form is momentarily thrown upon the screen, in the shape of a black and shadowy profile.

As they pass, the Guesser is obliged to name aloud

the person whose portrait he fancies he beholds. The mistakes are sometimes very droll, when the passers cleverly change their usual gait and carriage. Whoever is guessed rightly, pays a forfeit. The game may be varied and prolonged by changing the Guesser, and by allowing the passers-by to adopt some slight disguise.

Cross Questions will fill an interval between the different ways of gathering forfeits. There are several modes of putting them. One is, to write on a given

number of cards so many separate questions. An equal number of answers is similarly prepared—answers which perfectly fit some imaginary inquiry, but which are very absurd when applied to others. One set of cards is placed in the hands of a lady, the other of a gentleman, who shuffle and cut their packs. The person who holds the questions reads the first of them aloud, which is responded to by the other party's announcing the first answer. The interrogatory then continues until both packs are exhausted together.

As a sample of what may turn up, suppose:
Question. Are you of an affectionate disposition?
Answer. Whenever I can.
Q. Do you believe in lovers' vows?
A. Once a month, on the thirty-second.
Q. Are you faithful to your promises of attachment?
A. That depends on circumstances.
Q. Do you love those who love you?
A. A very pretty question to ask.
Q. Do you give yourself airs?
A. When I am fast asleep.
Q. Are you fond of dancing?
A. Inquire next door.
Q. Do you love me?
A. I will tell you that to-morrow.
Q. Are you capricious?
A. All day long and half the night.
Q. Are you fond of a *tête-à-tête?*
A. I should think so indeed.
Q. How do you do?
A. I haven't the slightest idea.

The principle of 'The House that Jack Built' may be extended to Games of Improvisation, which may be varied infinitely, every one being called upon to contribute his own quota of ingenuity. Suppose twelve persons seated in a circle. They draw lots for the respective places, which we will designate by the Roman numerals. No. I. has to begin the game; the others continue it in succession, each adding a little bit of his own, which all his followers are obliged to repeat, until the phrase attains the proportions of a rolling snowball. *Crescit eundo*, if Latin do not incur a forfeit in a Christmas game. The choice of the starting-point rests with I.; he takes whatever on earth he pleases. The more out of the way it is, and the more likely to puzzle his followers, the better. If his theme could baffle them all, *they would all* have to pay a forfeit. Suppose, then—

I. abruptly announces, 'Here is the Key of the king's garden.'

II. immediately adds, 'Here is the String tied to the Key of the king's garden.'

III. goes on, 'Here is the Rat, that gnawed the String, tied to the Key of the king's garden.'

IV. continues, 'Here is the Cat, that killed the Rat, that gnawed the String, tied to the Key of the king's garden.'

V. has 'Here is the Dog, that worried the Cat. . . .'

VI. 'Here is the Stick, that beat the Dog. . . .'

VII. 'Here is the Fire, that burnt the Stick. . . .'

VIII. 'Here is the Water, that quenched the Fire. . . .'

IX. 'Here is the Bucket, that brought the Water. . . .'

X. 'Here is the Wood, that made the Bucket. . . .'

XI. 'Here is the Tree, that furnished the Wood. . . .'

XII. ought to conclude triumphantly, 'Here is the Man, that *planted the Tree*, that furnished the Wood, that made

the Bucket, that brought the Water, that quenched the Fire, that burnt the Stick, that beat the Dog, that worried the Cat, that killed the Rat, that gnawed the String, tied to the Key of the king's garden!'

Let our readers try what they can make, in this style, out of 'Here is a Christmas Tree,' or 'This is Dr. Birchem's Rod.'

The same thing is put in another form, thus: when the circle is formed, I., passing a key, a pocket-knife, or other small object to his neighbour, says, 'I sell you the House of my little goodman.' II. does the same to *his* neighbour, saying, 'I sell you the Door of the House of my little goodman.' III. carries on the game with, 'I sell you the Lock of the Door of the House of my little goodman;' and so on. Whoever makes a mistake, or fails to hit upon some pertinent addition, pays a forfeit.

Quite a different affair is The Little Goodman is Still Alive. A piece of paper is twisted into a torch, lighted at a candle, and the *flame* blown out. As long as any sparks are still alight, it is passed from hand to hand, each person saying, 'My little Goodman is still alive,' or 'He is hard to kill, is my little Goodman,' or 'He is not dead yet, my little Goodman,' or any other phrase to the same purpose. The person in whose hands the last spark goes out pays a forfeit. As long as the fire remains strong and bright, people are in no hurry to pass it on to their neighbour, who is bound to receive it as soon as the formula is pronounced; when, on the contrary, the last spark threatens to die out, everybody gabbles with astounding rapidity, in order to get rid of it as quickly as possible. It certainly affords plenty of fun without taxing the intellect very severely.

The Game of Echo consists in telling a story, which Echo is supposed to interrupt whenever certain words (agreed upon beforehand) are pronounced. Each person *present has to reëcho* some one given word whenever it

occurs. The words selected are those likely to occur most frequently in the course of the tale. If a military anecdote have to be related, appropriate words for repetition would be *soldier, uniform, gaiters, rifle, sword, scabbard, bayonet, foraging-cap, havresac,* &c.

For instance: 'One morning a brave soldier (*soldier*) received orders to join his regiment; so he bade adieu to his friends, and set off on foot. After walking twenty miles, feeling a little tired, he sat down at the foot of a tree, resting his rifle (*rifle*) against its mossy trunk. Just as he was falling off into a doze, he heard piercing cries of distress; at which he drew his sword (*sword*) from its scabbard (*scabbard*) and fixed his bayonet (*bayonet*) at the end of his rifle (*rifle*). On reaching the spot, he found robbers plundering a lady and gentleman. One of the villains fired at him; but the shot passed through his foraging-cap (*foraging-cap*) without injuring a hair of his head; another struck at him with a knife, but it did not penetrate his leather gaiters (*gaiters*). With all their violence, they merely tore the soldier's (*soldier's*) uniform (*uniform*). The lady fainted with the fright; but the soldier (*soldier*), taking a cordial from his havresac (*havresac*), soon succeeded in restoring her to consciousness.' The yarn may be spun *ad libitum* to any length, calling forth responses from the surrounding echoes as frequently as possible. If they fail to take up the cue, a forfeit is their punishment.

In The Cricket and the Ants, you draw lots to see who first shall play the part of Cricket. That personage remains standing, while the Ants seat themselves before him in a line or round him in a circle, as pleases them best. The Cricket writes the name of some grain or other food which he selects as his diet with a pencil on a scrap of paper, which he folds and keeps concealed in his hand. After which, with a low bow to the Ants, he says, 'My dear friends, my worthy neighbours, I am very hungry. Won't

you spare me something to eat?' Then, addressing himself to one in particular, he asks, 'You, my dear lady, with such a good-natured face, what will you give me to stay my stomach?'

The other answers, 'I have nothing but a grain of Millet' (or any other grain she chooses to select) 'at your service.'

'Much obliged,' says the Cricket, 'but I can't eat that. And you, my charming neighbour,' addressing another, 'what will *you* bestow?'

'A nice little Worm, quite fat, and red.'

'No, I thank you, pretty neighbour; worms don't agree with me.'

He thus applies to one Ant after the other, who offer him a Crumb of Bread, a Fly, a grain of Wheat, Barley, Rice, &c. (indispensably something suited to his food, and which have not been mentioned before; otherwise the Ant has to pay a forfeit). When everybody has been applied to, and the article noted on the paper has not been named, the Cricket has to pay a forfeit and proceed to the second question. But if one of the Ants pronounces that word, the Cricket says, 'I accept it, kind friend, and may Heaven recompense your generosity!' He then shows his paper, and what is written on it. The Ant pays a forfeit, and, rising from her seat, has to change places with the Cricket.

But instead of recommencing the game, the new Cricket continues it as follows. Addressing any one of the party he pleases, 'Neighbour,' he says, 'I have had an excellent dinner, thanks to the Ants' hospitality. I now feel an inclination to dance. What dance do you advise me to try?' (The name of some dance is noted on paper, and concealed, exactly as the food had been.)

The Ants answer, 'A hornpipe—a minuet—a reel—a jig,' according to their guess or fancy. So long as *the dance is* not named the Cricket manifests his unwillingness *to perform the* one proposed. If no one hits on the right

dance, the Cricket has to go on to the third question, paying a forfeit. The Ant who names any dance a second time also incurs a forfeit. On naming the dance inscribed, an Ant is metamorphosed into the Cricket.

'I am going to dance,' says the new Cricket; 'but dancing without music is very poor work. What instrument do you prefer me to dance to?' The Ants name the Fiddle, the Bagpipes, the Clarionet, the Piano, and so forth, until they hit on the one inscribed beforehand; the result of which is the same as on the preceding occasions.

'I have had enough dancing!' the fourth Cricket exclaims. 'If you will only keep quiet, my excellent friends, and not talk so loud, and not laugh at all, I should like a nap. Where do you advise me to take it?' Each Ant interrogated replies, 'On a bed of Rose-leaves, on the Grass, on the Sand, on a Mossy Bank,' &c., with the same conditions as before.

The fifth and last Cricket says, 'I should sleep soundly enough on what you have named, but I fear some bird will come and eat me up. Tell me which bird is the fondest of crickets?' They guess the Nightingale, the Lark, the Rook, and so on, until the right bird has been named; after which, they proceed to redeeming the forfeits.

Forfeits should be as varied, ingenious, and unexpected as possible. New ones, invented on the spur of the moment, are sure to meet with signal success. But no one should venture to play at forfeits who has not, in the first place, perfect command of temper, or who cannot, secondly, while in the height of merriment, observe the rules of good breeding and decorum. Young people gifted with an average amount of tact will easily distinguish between well-bred fun and vulgar coarseness. Everybody admitted into society must know that an easily-perceptible barrier separates the horse-play of rustics from the games of persons of refinement. As there are jokes permissible and *jokes not permissible* in ladies' company, so there may even

be romping which the seasonal or the festive occasion allows, as there certainly is romping which may not, without risk of impropriety and offence, be indulged in on any occasion. It is impossible to define the limit in words. Everybody's good sense and good feeling will tell how far to go and no farther, in relaxing the reins of strict etiquette while indulging in the outbreaks of social mirth.

In no class of forfeits is good breeding more indispensable than in that which involves the act of kissing. But a word to the wise is sufficient. Our forefathers practised them innocently, and so, it is hoped, may we; and, therefore, without further preface or sermon, we will give a few examples, beginning with the tantalising position of being A Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance. In this, the person to pay the penalty takes his seat on a chair, when a lady comes and sits upon his knees, to be kissed by another gentleman.

Amongst penitential kisses are the Convent kiss and the Capuchin's kiss, so named out of pity, or irony, or both. For the first the back of a chair is substituted for the grating of the convent door; and as the wooden bars are mostly wider apart than the iron ones, the former have decidedly the advantage.

For the Monastic kiss, a gentleman and lady kneel on the carpet back to back. Both then turn their heads, one to the right, the other to the left, until the desired salute is given. As the position is rather fatiguing for the lady, and might even cause her to fall, it is allowable for the gentleman delicately to help her to keep her balance with his arm.

Kissing your own shadow is performed by placing yourself between the light and the lady.

Kissing the candlestick is a little trick played on a *lady* whom you have cunningly persuaded into holding a *candle.*

Kissing the bottom of the candlestick may be effected by placing the candlestick on the lady's head.

Showing the Spirit of Contradiction is doing the very reverse of what the company tells you to do. You are a lucky fellow, therefore, if a lady tells you that she insists on your not kissing her. When condemned, as a forfeit, To Sulk, you whisper some one lady's name in the ear of the person who holds the forfeits, and then put yourself in a corner. The forfeit-holder commands the ladies, one

after the other, to go and console you in your corner. You are obliged, however unwillingly, to turn your back on all except the fair one whose name you had previously designated, whom you may kiss as heartily as you please.

To Go a-Begging and To Perform a Pilgrimage are favourite forfeits. For the first, you go down on your knees before a lady, and touch her hands repeatedly with your own hands clasped. She pretends to be deaf to *your entreaties,* and affects not to understand what it is

you require. At last she asks, 'Do you want some bread? Do you want some water? Do you want a halfpenny? Do you want a pair of shoes?' and so on. To each of these questions you reply negatively by a shake of the head and continued supplications with your clasped hands. At last she inquires, 'Do you want a kiss?' At which you jump up joyfully, and immediately take the proffered salute.

For the second, we will suppose the company to form a sort of circle. You take a lady by the hand, and lead her round the circle, presenting her to every person present; saying to the gentlemen, 'A kiss, if you please, for my little sister, and a little bit of bread for myself;' to the ladies, 'A little bit of bread for my little sister, and a kiss for myself.' The kiss can by no means be refused.

In Distributing Kisses by Chance, the person forfeited, unfortunately, has none for himself. He takes separately the four kings and the four queens out of a pack of cards, shuffles them separately, and then gives one each of the first to any four gentlemen he chooses in the company, and one each of the second to any four ladies. The holder of the king of hearts is bound to kiss the holderess of the queen of hearts, and so on of the rest. All which seems slow work to the kiss-distributor. Nevertheless, he may derive a little amusement in giving the kings to the vainest young gentlemen present, and the queens to the oldest or plainest ladies.

If condemned to the Kiss with a Right-about Face, you must go and stand with your back to a door, where you call upon a lady to come and stand opposite to you, facing you. She then calls on a gentleman, who places himself close to her, back to back; which goes on until the whole company has formed a line of couples. At a signal from the Mistress of the Revels, everybody performs the evolution of right-about face, and kisses the person so *presented to him.* The consequence is that you face the

door; and your duty is to give it a smack as hearty as any of those you may hear sounding behind you.

To have to act the Lovers' Bridge is not an agreeable forfeit to pay. You go down on your hands and knees; a lady and gentleman sit on your back, and while seated there give and receive a kiss. If, in consequence of weakness, or a sudden spasm, you let them down, they will hardly be so unreasonable as to complain of the infirmities to which juvenile nature is liable. To Measure out so many Ells or Yards of Love, you lead a lady into the middle of the room; take both her hands in yours; you stretch out both arms, as if measuring cloth, and deposit a gentle embrace on her cheek. The pleasing operation has to be repeated as many times as Ells of Love are ordered.

The Hare's Kiss, or the Rabbit's Kiss, is too ridiculous; yet we have seen it given—and taken. The couple indicated take a needleful of thread, both putting one end in their mouth. They then mumble and nibble, and take it in, both their portion, rabbit-wise, maintaining their gravity all the while, until their faces are near enough to accomplish the *dénouement*. If they laugh they will be a long while about it.

The Journey to Corinth—or anywhere else—resembles, in some respects, John Gilpin's famous and unfruitful ride. The forfeit-payer, who is doing penance, holding a lighted taper, leads round the room another gentleman, with a white pocket-handkerchief in his hand. This gentleman kisses every lady in turn, and each time politely wipes the lips of his conductor, the penitential forfeit-payer, which may water, but which want no wiping.

You Kiss the Lady you Love best, Without Anybody's knowing Who she is, by so saluting every lady present. In the Disappointed Kiss, the lady advances towards the penitent, as if to confer that favour on him; then, suddenly turning aside, she allows her nearest neighbour to touch her cheek with his lips.

When compelled by a forfeit To Sigh, you go into a corner, and wait there until you are asked, 'For whom are you sighing?' 'I am sighing for So-and-so,' you amorously reply. Miss So-and-so is obliged to come and receive your salute, and in turn take her place in the Corner of Sighs. And so it goes on, until the whole have sighed successively, and taken their places accordingly in line. When it is complete the first Sigher returns to his seat, kissing every lady in the line; the second Sigher does the same, saluting every gentleman; and so on, until the last, who must kiss his own thumb, for want of something better.

When a forfeit orders you to Make your Will, you bequeath to each of the persons present some portion of your real or imaginary personal or mental qualities. As in actual will-making, it is a delicate task, in which it is not easy to satisfy everybody. It affords abundant opportunities both for complaints and pleasantries, which latter must be cautiously administered, to avoid giving offence to any one's feelings. The same of Playing the Counsellor. According to the order received, the forfeit-payer suggests, either aloud or in a whisper, a bit of advice to every one present. Clever the gentleman, or the lady, who can get out of it with general approval.

If you want to set a task not easy to perform, but which is sure to give rise to a good deal of fun, order a person to blow out a candle which is rapidly passed in front of his nose, without permitting him to turn his head. It requires a good shot to do it the first time, or even the second or third.

Drawn by J. Gordon Thompson.]

CHRISTMAS THE AVENGER ! [p. 189.

COUSIN GEOFFREY'S CHAMBER.*

BY HON. MRS. HENRY CLIFFORD.

PART I.

'THERE are Annie and Margaret Ducie,—that makes two,—and the Ladies Lascelles, five: I don't see how we can squeeze in another young lady, by any possibility!'

Mrs. Pagonel was the speaker; and it was the sixth time that Beatrice and I had heard her say this, always winding up with a piteous appeal to us—

'Girls, what am I to do?'

'Really, mother dear, I don't see what you can do,' said Beatrice, 'except just write and say the truth, and that we are very sorry and so forth.'

'What's the trouble, mother?' asked Hugh Pagonel, appearing in the doorway, ready equipped for his day's shooting.

'O my dear, didn't you hear at breakfast? Those tiresome Mortons,—at least they are charming people, I'm sure, only it is inconvenient,—they have written to ask if they may bring a young lady, a niece of theirs, to stay here for the New-Year's-eve ball.'

'Oh! never mind, mother; pack her in somehow or other, can't you? The more the merrier. Let her take my room, and I could have a shake-down anywhere.'

'You are the kindest of boys,' his mother said, looking fondly up at his stately height and bright good-tempered face; 'but it would be of no use, my dear, thank you. I

* The main incident of this story is one which really took place.

could not offer a young lady a room in the bachelors' row, up a separate staircase and all: impossible! and it wouldn't do to make room for her by putting a maid there. No, no, I really must write, as Beatrice proposes, only it does so vex your father to seem inhospitable.'

'Can't Bee and Katie put up together for those two nights?'

'Katie is to be badly enough quartered as it is,' said Mrs. Pagonel, smiling at me; 'we mean to put her into that little oak cupboard, which really is too small to turn round in, and Bee will give up her room to the Miss Ducies, and sleep in my dressing closet. It is wonderful how little accommodation there is in this great rambling place.'

'Well, I can only see one thing to be done, mother,' said Hugh; 'give Miss What's-her-name the choice of staying away, or sleeping in Cousin Geoffrey's chamber.'

'Really, mamma, we never thought of that,' said Beatrice; 'it is never used as a sitting-room,—why not put a bed there for once? You don't really believe that it is haunted, do you?'

'Not exactly, but such a dreary room, and on the ground floor away from everybody. I could hardly put a guest there.'

'No. mamma, I never thought of your putting a guest there; but why should not Miss Morton sleep in your dressing closet?—she must put up with close quarters—and I will have the little stretcher bed put into Cousin Geoffrey's room.'

'My dear child, I would not on any account risk your nerves meeting with any shock.'

'My nerves are in no danger, mother, I assure you,' said Beatrice, in her quiet rather demure manner. 'I don't believe in ghosts.'

'That is no reason why you should not be afraid of *them,' I remarked*; 'you had much better let me sleep in

the haunted room. I do believe in ghosts, you know, and I should not at all mind seeing one; it would be great fun.'

'I think we have used you ill enough already, Katie,' said Mrs. Pagonel; 'we don't treat you much like a visitor;' and, with her sweet smile, she held out to me a hand, which, with its delicacy and look of exquisite keeping, its soft palm and nervous fluttering fingers, always seemed to me so like herself, and her whole character. I had by no means lost my childish pleasure in admiring it, and in fingering her many bright rings, and I took it into both my own hands as I answered her last speech.

'Indeed, I should hope not! No place ever seems half so like home as dear old Ernscliff.'

'We'll settle it as I proposed, please, mamma,' Beatrice said, with the sober, well-judged decisiveness which she usually brought to the rescue in her mother's many small worries and uncertainties. 'I will take all the trouble if you will let me, and I will go at once and desire Mrs. White to see that the room is well aired before the 31st.'

And, after making an orderly arrangement of her work, she left the room.

'I'm off too now, mother,' said Hugh, who had waited good-naturedly to see if he could be of any use. 'Bee is a capital girl, isn't she? she always hits on the right thing; and if she should see the ghost, I hope she'll ask him where the treasure is; for, by Jove, it's wanted!'

He left the room: and his words, light as they were, called up a deep sigh from his mother, of which I partly knew the cause, for I was too much like a child of the house not to be aware that there were money embarrassments at Ernscliff Castle, which weighed heavily upon them all. The dear old Squire, the kindest, but not the wisest of men, had been led into foolish speculations, which had resulted in severe losses. To meet these *demands he had* been obliged to effect a heavy mortgage

on his estate; and the loss of income which this involved could not fail of being a serious annoyance and difficulty to a family like the Pagonels—warm-hearted, open-handed people, with a considerable position in the county to keep up, with the endless expenses belonging to a large estate, and with numerous traditions of hospitality and charity, to break through any of which would have broken Squire Pagonel's heart as well. I knew that Mrs. Pagonel had been anxious that the New-Year's gathering of county neighbours, which was one of the institutions of Ernscliff Castle, should not take place this year; but her husband could not bear to give it up, especially as Hugh, whose birthday fell on the last day of the year, was to come of age, and his father had long determined that this event should be celebrated by a ball.

'Let us economise in some other way,' he had said, as his custom was, and as his wife knew that he would say again when she should demur to a month in London, or a trip to Scotland, or any other pet scheme which involved the spending of money. So, with a little sigh, she had resigned herself, only trying feebly to introduce little economical amendments into the arrangements, to which, of course, the old servants opposed all their *vis inertiæ*, and which would never have been carried through, but for Beatrice's marvellous gift of managing everything and everybody. She had, as usual, been head in all the plans, and I had tried to be hands and feet; for, as I have already said, I was like another daughter of the house, though our relationship—for we did 'call cousins'—was of the vaguest and most distant kind. My father, General Seaton, and Mr. Pagonel of Ernscliff had been schoolfellows and brother officers; and their friendship had been cemented by the marriage of both, within a few years of each other, with two girls, distant relations, who had been brought up together.

My father and mother had been for the last ten years

in India, and I had been left under the care of an excellent kind-hearted lady who took a small number of pupils, and under whose roof I had led a healthy and satisfactory life enough; but Ernscliff, where I spent all my holidays, was the home of my heart; and it made me sad to think that this was probably my last visit there for many years, as I was to join my father and mother in India in a few months' time. It was a place to attach any child, and especially an imaginative one like myself, used to the monotonous confinement of a London square. The park was wild in the extreme, a wide stretch of wood and hill and moorland, and the castle was a heavy dark-red mass of building, standing at the very edge of a steep descent, at the foot of which nestled the quaint little old-fashioned village, so directly below, that a stone could easily have been thrown from one of the castle windows down straight into the market-place. Inside it was a queer rambling house, full of narrow passages, and large long vaulted rooms, and unexpected staircases round dangerous corners, leading to haunted-looking attics and ranges of dungeon-like cellars; charming for hide and seek, as we had often found, Hugh and Beatrice and I. The entrance-hall was of dark oak, with a stone floor, and with two heavy arched doors leading from it to the dining-room and library; and a third, rarely opened, which belonged to the room I have mentioned before—the blue chamber of the house—the haunted apartment known as Cousin Geoffrey's room. A gloomy gruesome place it certainly was, partly because it had never, for generations, been made use of, so that it had gradually become a sort of hospital for disabled furniture and a receptacle for lumber. It took its share in the quarterly sweepings and scrubbings; but at other times I do not think the housemaids frequented it much; and, though I never heard any well-authenticated story of ghostly sights or sounds being seen or heard there, there was *a vague horror* of the place, which, as well as its

quaint name, had been handed down from generation to generation among the traditions of Ernscliff Castle.

When Hugh had gone out shooting, and Mrs. Pagonel had settled herself to her note-writing, I fell to musing on all I had ever heard of this room, and I was surprised to find how very little it was. The subject had hardly ever been mentioned before us in our nursery days; and I knew that Mrs. Pagonel, who believed every one's nerves to be as delicately irritable as her own, would not encourage its discussion now; but I resolved, on the next opportunity, to ask Beatrice or Hugh to tell me who was this dead and gone Cousin Geoffrey, who was supposed to haunt the chamber to which he had given his name.

The opportunity soon came. Dinner-hours in those days were earlier than they are now, and the blessed institution of five-o'clock tea did not yet exist; but Beatrice was in advance of her age in this respect, and she had infected me with her propensity for tea-drinking at irregular hours. It had become a practice with her and me to find ourselves, in the dusk of the winter afternoons, on the large rug of furs which was spread before the wide old-fashioned hearth in the entrance-hall: there, crouching in the corners, out of the blaze and into the warmth, we used to sit and chat, and drink tea, which we waylaid on its road from the kitchen to the housekeeper's room; and there Hugh would often join us, glad to sit and rest before dressing-time, though his mud-coated gaiters and damp shooting-jacket were not presentable in the civilised drawing-room regions. Those hours were some of the most delightful in my many happy days at Ernscliff; it was so easy to talk, so charming to listen while the red firelight threw weird glares and ghostly shadows across the dark hall, and while a cheerful accompaniment was kept up by the crackling logs and the click of Beatrice's *never* idle knitting-needles.

On this evening we assembled rather earlier than usual,

with aching arms and sore fingers, after a busy afternoon spent in dressing the castle with holly in honour of the approaching Christmas.

As we drew round the fire, Hugh, who had good-naturedly come in early in order to help us in our task, asked his sister if her arrangement held good for New-Year's-eve.

'Yes,' she answered, smiling; 'the mother was rather afraid about the ghost; but it is the best plan, and I am quite willing to take the risk.'

'I wish I knew the real story about that room,' said I; 'it was always tabooed in the nursery, and I have only heard bits and scraps of it; tell it me, Bee, won't you?'

'I would with pleasure, but I really do not know it,' said Beatrice demurely. '*I* don't take much interest in ghost stories.'

'I can't make out that there is any ghost in the case,' said Hugh; 'but the other day, when I had to look up a lot of musty old family papers, I read the whole history of the man who used to live in that room. He didn't begin life as a ghost, you know.'

'Oh! then, do tell it nicely, and make a story of it,' I said, cowering closer into my corner, in expectation of something delightfully horrible.

'Well, it dates back to the days of Queen Bess. The Pagonels of that time—not our branch of the family, you know—had the ill-luck to be Papists, and, after being rather in favour as long as Mary reigned, they found themselves quite in a wrong box after her sister came to the throne. The family consisted of two brothers, Ralph, the possessor of Ernscliff, and Geoffrey, the younger, who, I believe, had hung about the house contentedly enough, doing everything that nobody else chose to do, as younger brothers did in those days, till there was some trouble between them about a certain beautiful cousin, one Beatrix

Pagonel, who had been brought up with them both, and whom they both fell in love with.'

'Which did she like best?'

'She liked the elder brother best, like a well brought-up young woman. In this instance I don't much wonder, for, judging by their portraits, Ralph had the best of it. That is his picture over there; it is too dark to see it now, but you remember what a fine handsome face it is.'

'I would not praise it, if I were you,' said Beatrice, smiling, 'for it is the image of yourself.'

'I'm glad I'm so good-looking. I only hope I sha'n't live to be hanged like my ancestor.'

'Hanged? What had he done?'

'You shall hear. The Pagonels stuck to their faith when times changed, the only alteration being that their old chaplain disappeared for a little while, and then re-appeared in the character of secretary and house-steward —a very transparent deceit, I should think, but I daresay nobody wished to get the family into trouble. Now the story goes that somewhere in the intricacies of the castle there was a hiding hole, so remote and so skilfully concealed that it defied discovery; the secret of which used to be in the possession of the head of the family, and of one confidant only chosen by himself. It is said that even the political or religious fugitives who had sometimes taken shelter there had been led to and from it blindfold, such was the jealousy with which the Pagonels guarded their precious secret. In Ralph Pagonel's day he had chosen for his confidant his brother Geoffrey; and, trusting to this place of refuge, where the old priest and all his pious belongings could be stowed away at a moment's notice, they practised their religion more fearlessly than most folks of their persuasion in the glorious days of good Queen Bess. At last, a few years after Ralph's marriage, the coolness between him and Geoffrey seems to have ended in an open rupture. Ralph Pagonel

turned Geoffrey out of doors, with high words, which I have no doubt he deserved, and Geoffrey went off, vowing to be revenged on his brother.'

'Oh! I know what he is going to do—he gave information.'

'When next the little congregation at Ernscliff assembled for prayers, one who was always on the watch on these occasions came to give notice that the sheriff's officers were in the neighbourhood. When they arrived, everything was prepared to receive them, and Mr. Pagonel and his wife welcomed them politely, trusting to baffle them, as they had done before; but fancy their dismay and their fury when they saw Geoffrey appear, bringing with him the poor old priest and all the sacred vessels which had been hidden in the hiding hole, of which he only knew the secret!'

'Wretched man! no wonder he can't rest in his grave.'

'I don't know that he ever had a grave.'

'Is he still living then, like the Wandering Jew? I hope he won't come back some day and claim the estate, Hugh.'

'Wait till you hear the end. How far all these ins and outs are true I can't tell, but it is certain that Ralph and Beatrix Pagonel, and Francis Rivers, priest, are among those who died on the scaffold, and that Geoffrey was permitted to take possession of the estate "in consideration of good service rendered to the crown." He seems to have led a most miserable life here, shunned by everybody as a traitor and a fratricide, and to have shut himself up at last quite alone in the castle, in that dreary room, having driven even his servants away.'

'I don't feel as if I could pity him.'

'He was supposed to have become a great miser, for he squeezed all he could out of his tenants; and it was believed that vast sums were accumulated in the castle while he lived here; but when our branch of the family

took possession they found not a coin in the house and no signs of wealth—not even a trace of the family plate or jewels, which had been extremely valuable.'

'When did your people come into the estate?'

'When this wretched man disappeared mysteriously, which he did at last. There is no record among the papers of the exact way in which his absence was first discovered; probably, from his queer hermit way of life, not for a long time; but after some months had elapsed his cousin, our ancestor, came and took possession.'

'Where can the hiding hole be?' I asked.

'To tell you the truth, I don't believe it ever existed. There are no end of closets and corners in all parts of the house, as you know, where a person who knew the place well could play at hide and seek very cleverly with a stranger; I fancy that is the origin of the story.'

'And has any one ever seen this horrible Cousin Geoffrey?'

'I never heard of his being seen, but I have no doubt the horror which was felt for him caused his room to be shut up; and that of course would lead to all kinds of stories; and then there was a great belief that he had left a treasure buried somewhere, and might appear in approved ghost fashion to show its whereabouts.'

'O Bee, what a chance for you!'

Beatrice laughed, and said she was in no way desirous of an interview with her unpleasant ancestor, though she added, with a sigh:

'Anything short of that I would go through for the chance of finding the treasure.'

'Ah! and wouldn't I?' said Hugh. 'I can't bear to see the dear old Squire look so careworn; I'd do anything to put things square for him.'

'Not *anything*, Hugh?' his sister said, with emphasis; and I saw in the firelight how the colour mounted to his *forehead as he* answered:

'What do you mean? Why do you say that?'

'Because I know there are some things which you would not do for any one,' she answered. 'Did you hear mamma say that Miss Barnett is coming to the ball with the Lascelles?'

I didn't know why the name of the great Blankshire heiress struck unpleasantly on my ear, but it certainly did, and Hugh's free gay laugh had never been so welcome.

'Oh! no, hang it,' he answered; 'we are not quite come to that: I'd sooner have

> "My hollow tree,
> My crust of bread and liberty."'

There was a pause, and his tone was quite grave and sad when he said, a moment after:

'But at all events, I'll never do anything to add to his cares—God helping me.'

Nobody spoke, and we all sat and looked at the fire, and I felt—I don't know how. Hugh Pagonel had always been very dear to me; all, and more than all, that our close intimacy warranted—brother, companion, champion; but I had never thought of him in any other light; and when, with the shy consciousness of my seventeen years, had come the feeling that our friendship could not be as close and free as that of myself and Beatrice, I had been more irritated and chafed than confused by the conviction. But the idea which Beatrice had suggested was strangely distasteful to me; it made me realise how dreary it would be to see Hugh married to another woman; and I found myself recollecting with a pang that my father had no fortune independent of his profession, and that for Hugh to marry a penniless wife would be to take the surest way of adding to the Squire's embarrassments. As I raised my eyes I met Hugh's fixed upon me with a look as sad and *earnest as my own* could have been. For the first time,

his gaze confused me, and it was a relief when the sound of the great clanging house-bell scattered us in our different directions to dress for dinner.

PART II.

ON New-Year's-eve the guests assembled for the coming-of-age ball that night, and to stay over the next day, when a tenants' supper was to take place. There is no need to describe them: they were pleasant, good-natured people, most of them old friends and neighbours of the Pagonels; and as I had met them year after year, during my holiday visits at Ernscliff, they were all kind in their notice of me, and civil in their regrets at hearing that this was my last stay there before leaving England. The only stranger, beside the Miss Morton whose coming had caused so much discussion, was Miss Barnett, the heiress, who came with the Lord Lieutenant's party from Lascelles Acres. I could not help looking at her with much interest, and I am afraid I felt an uncharitable vexation at finding her to be a remarkably sweet-looking girl, very young, and simple in appearance and manner, and so unaffectedly delighted with the grand old castle, and the wide expanse of park through which they had driven, that I could almost have accused her, spitefully, of wishing to win Hugh's heart by praising the home which he loved so dearly. With my childish notion of what an heiress must be like, I was rather surprised to see her dressed in a sober dark-coloured linsey and coarse straw bonnet of the plainest kind; but when we all went to dress after dinner, I heard Lady Lascelles telling Mrs. Pagonel that she had persuaded 'Isabella to bring her jewels, as she thought they really were worth seeing;' and accordingly she entered the great drawing-room where we were to

dance blazing with diamonds, which gleamed from the bosom of her white-lace dress, and shone like stars in her thick plaits of light-brown hair. She blushed a little when they were admired by all who felt intimate enough to speak of them to her, and anxiously explained that Lady Lascelles had made her wear them, as if she dreaded being supposed to have herself wished to make the display: and again I felt unreasonably annoyed, angered, at the pretty diffident manner which formed such a piquant contrast to her gorgeous ornaments, and cruelly mortified when a glance at the mirror showed me my tall figure in a dress of the simplest muslin (manufactured by my own fingers under the superintendence of Mrs. Pagonel's maid), and my dark hair with a simple wreath of holly laid across it. The consciousness that my face was wreathed into a peculiarly crabbed and unlovely form warned me to recover my temper, and try to acquire something less unlike the sweet looks of the heiress; and I turned away from the mirror and endeavoured to throw myself into the interest of the moment. The ball began and went on with great spirit; I had plenty of partners, and should have enjoyed myself thoroughly, if it had not been that Hugh did not dance with me—a state of things unprecedented at any of the Ernscliff festivities since I was seven years old. Last year I should have taken him to task for his neglect as fearlessly as if he had been my brother; now I could only fret inwardly while I tried to assume an extra gaiety of manner whenever he was near me, especially if Miss Barnett was his partner.

The result was that I was thoroughly tired before the end of the evening, and heartily glad when I heard the guests who were not staying at Ernscliff order their carriages; and when the Squire insisted that the ball should wind up with Sir Roger de Coverley, I stole away into a small room adjoining the drawing-room, and always known as the 'spirit chamber,'—not, I believe, from any

ghostly association, but simply from the preference of the Pagonel ancestry for having something at hand, Gamp-like, to which they 'could put their lips when so disposed.' It was fitted up as a little boudoir, and there I found Beatrice alone, looking so blue and cold, that I exclaimed at the sight,

'What have you been doing to yourself, Bee? You look like a ghost.'

'Don't talk about ghosts!' she said, with a little shiver; 'I am so ashamed of myself, Katie! I have a regular fit of *nerves* upon me to-night—so unlike me!'

'Are you not well, dear Bee?'

'Quite; but it is so foolish! You know I can't dance long without getting a pain in my side, and it is the same with Margaret Ducie; so we came in here to rest, and then our partners would come with us; and somehow they began asking about the family pictures in the hall, and that led to talking about Cousin Geoffrey's room, and they made me tell the story.'

'And you frightened yourself? O Bee, what a triumph! I thought you were much too wise to care for ghosts or goblins.'

'That didn't frighten me; but then Margaret told us their horrible Ducie ghost-story, and Captain Lascelles capped it with something worse. You know I always dislike that sort of ghost talk, which seems to me such waste of time and trial of nerves for nothing; but I could not stop it, and none of them knew that I was to sleep in that dreary lonely room to-night.'

'And you sha'n't sleep there,' I cried; 'you shall have my room, Bee darling. I sha'n't mind sleeping downstairs in the least.'

'No; I'm not quite so selfish as that,' she said. 'I shall be all right when I get to bed and to sleep. I can't *think* why I have such a silly fit: it is very unlike me, I *flatter myself*—very odd.'

'Not odd at all, my dear, when you consider that you were up at five this morning dressing the supper-table, and have been hard at work ever since. You may have prodigious strength of mind, but in body you are not a Hercules; and nerves belong to the body, don't they?'

The dance was over, the guests departing; and we had to emerge from our retreat. At the door Hugh was standing, leaning against the wall, and looking gloomy enough, but gazing fixedly across the room. Following his eyes, I saw, with a thrill of pain, that they were riveted on Miss Barnett, who was looking peculiarly soft and attractive as she stood listening to Captain Lascelles, the light flashing from her splendid jewels.

'Do you admire her, Hugh?' I heard Beatrice whisper.

'I admire her jewels,' he answered; 'but her hair is hardly dark enough to set them off. Wouldn't they look well in black hair! I certainly do like diamonds.'

'Most people do,' his sister said, smiling.

'I wish I thought that I should ever be able to dress up my wife in such jewels as those,' he answered.

'Well,' she glanced with her demure gravity at his face, 'you know the way, Hugh; faint heart never won fair lady.'

'Ah! but the jewels must be of my giving, or I shouldn't value them a rush,' he said; and as he moved off to hand some lady to her carriage, I felt my heart wonderfully lightened, and was ready to respond cordially when Beatrice began to sing Miss Barnett's praises.

It was some time before the various guests were shown to their rooms; but as soon as they had disappeared in their different directions I drew Beatrice into the little closet where I was to sleep. She was looking white and over-tired; and though well aware that it was not easy to persuade her to relinquish a plan, I was determined that she should not pass the night in that dreary room down-*stairs.*

'Beatrice,' I began, trying to be very authoritative, 'I am going to help you out of your dress, and wrap you up in my dressing-gown, and then I shall carry my goods down-stairs and bring yours up. I am quite determined to change places with you to-night.'

'You shall do nothing of the kind, Katie: I am quite ashamed of myself as it is, but you can't suppose I'm quite so selfish!'

'Selfish? but really and truly I should enjoy the fun. You know I like an adventure, and here is the chance of one for me; and I am not feeling in the least nervous to-night.'

'I wouldn't on any account. Couldn't we both squeeze in here for this short part of a night?'

And she glanced at the tiny bed which had been with difficulty wedged in from wall to wall of the little cell. I laughed at the idea, but was charmed to see this sign of wavering; and by a few more vehement words I carried my point, for indeed Beatrice was over-tired and unhinged, and had not the strength to oppose me. In one thing, however, she was unpersuadable; she insisted on helping me to carry down my garments, and on seeing me safely installed in my apartment. This I allowed her to do, knowing that the servants were still about, and that therefore her night journey through the gloomy house would not be as eerie as it sounded.

The door of Cousin Geoffrey's room gave a dismal creak as it swung back on its rusty hinges, and the candle which each of us carried only made the great cavern of darkness look more impenetrable. Truly it was a dreary room, even apart from the memories of sin, and remorse, and lonely wretchedness which seemed to hang heavily about it. Like most rooms in Ernscliff Castle it was panelled with oak; the window recesses were of such depth as to form small rooms, testifying to the immense *thickness* of the walls, and were only half concealed by *the scanty curtains*, so fusty and ragged that I think they

must have come down from the days of Cousin Geoffrey himself. There was a dreary array of dilapidated chairs, broken tables, and odds and ends of furniture banished for their ugliness from the more civilised parts of the house, and a space had been cleared in the middle for the light stretcher—a reminiscence of the Squire's campaigning days—for a hastily-arranged dressing-table and a sponging-bath—the latter an essentially every-day, nineteenth-century affair, which was quite a cheering sight amidst so much dilapidation and decay. The housemaid had forgotten, or had been afraid to visit the room since dark, and the logs on the hearth had smouldered themselves away. This was the first thing which struck Beatrice, and with a shiver she exclaimed—

'Oh, dear, they have let the fire out! how excessively dreary!'

'Never mind,' I cried, 'it is all *en règle;* much more ghostified than if it were warm and light, like any commonplace room. Now, Bee, make haste to bed. Here, bundle all these things over your arm—good-night.'

'I can't bear to leave you,' she said, lingering; but my spirit was now thoroughly up to the adventure, and I would not hear of giving it up. I laughed at all Beatrice's demurs and scruples, told her that she would be a ghost herself if she stayed any longer shivering in the cold; and finally dismissed her, saying, as I gave her a last kiss, and saw her wistful troubled look at me: 'My dear, you needn't make yourself unhappy; you know I don't possess nerves—I never was afraid of anything in my life!'

Foolish boastful words, which I had often said before, but which I was never to say again!

PART III.

As the last sound of Beatrice's receding footsteps died away I did feel rather lonely and queer; but rallying my spirits, and telling myself that it was 'capital fun,' as Hugh would have said, I began bustling about and preparing for bed, without leaving myself time to get nervous. I was soon out of my ball-dress and in my warm dressing-gown and fur-lined slippers, which felt very comfortable in that cold cellar-like atmosphere. The unplaiting of my hair was a longer business, and I could not help falling into a reverie as I sat opposite the glass, and forgot cold and fright and all things in speculating as to whether Hugh would, after all, repair the family fortunes by marrying Miss Barnett. With an ingenuity in self-torture which never, I think, exists in perfection except at seventeen, I built a series of most gloomy castles in the air—saw Hugh married to the heiress, Beatrice settled far from Ernscliff, and the dear old place closed against me for ever; and then I indulged in a hearty fit of the dismals over my own future—in a strange country, and with parents who were little more to me than a vague memory and a name. I sat mournfully gazing into the depths of the looking-glass, when I suddenly found that a pair of gloomy painted eyes, from the wall behind, were looking back at me with the earnest solemn gaze which always lives in the fixed eyes of a picture. I hastily turned and looked at the portrait, which I had not noticed before, but on which the rays of my candle happened now to fall. It represented a young man, not uncouth to look upon, though there was a peering near-sighted contraction about the eyes, and a sort of suppressed sneer on the mouth, which gave an unpleasant expression to the otherwise handsome features. No doubt this was the wretched Geoffrey Pagonel. Whose portrait but his would have been thus banished from the hall, where all

the others hung in honoured remembrance? The haunting eyes of the picture made me shiver. I could hardly help gazing at it, fascinated, and felt as if in another moment the painted lips would begin to move, and the painted finger be raised to point out the buried treasure. Oh, it was very well to laugh and joke about the ghost in the cheerful rooms up-stairs; but it was very different in this gloomy darkened chamber, and with those spectral eyes glaring at me from the walls. A sensation as if cold water were running down the back of my neck suddenly warned me that I was getting overpoweringly nervous. There was nothing for it but to hurry over my preparations and plunge into the safe harbour of my bed, where I could draw the clothes over eyes and ears, and try to sleep away the haunted hours till daylight. With a sudden resolution I sprang up, and in doing so struck the candlestick with my elbow. It fell with a crash to the ground, the light being of course extinguished in the fall, and myself left in total darkness!

That was a horrible moment; and yet there was something ludicrous in the adventure which gave me courage, and I instantly remembered that the fire in the hall had been burning cheerily a few minutes before, and; moreover, that a box of lucifer-matches and a pair of unlighted candles were always to be found on the mantelpiece there. To finish undressing in the dark, *tête-à-tête* with that dreadful picture, was not to be thought of; and, though not very sure of my bearings, I began to grope my way in the direction where I believed the door to be, stretching out my hand before me in hopes of finding the handle. Suddenly my foot caught, probably in a hole in the ragged carpet; I fell forward, and was saved by the wall, or rather the door, for it yielded as I fell against it, and as I stumbled forward I heard it close with a sharp click behind me. I must be in the hall, of course; but why was it in such total darkness? Could that blazing fire have

gone out entirely in so very short a time? And even if it had, was there no glimmer from the staircase-window, which I knew had no shutters? and why was there such a strange close smell, as if there was hardly any fresh air in the place? I stood for a moment bewildered; then I determined to grope my way along the wall, where I must come in time to the table, which stood only a few paces to the right of the door leading into Cousin Geoffrey's room. I groped on—on—on—till I was suddenly brought up by another wall, at right angles. Turning the corner, I groped on there, and this time I was stopped by stumbling against what seemed to be a chest or box, about as high as my waist. I still felt my way on, and there seemed to be other chests, sacks, boxes. Oh! where—where was I? Was there any cupboard in the room into which I had unwittingly strayed? No; I was sure that there was none. Again and again I felt high and low for a door-handle, but the wooden walls were hopelessly smooth; there was no trace of the door by which I had entered, though I felt sure that I must have groped more than once quite round my prison. It appeared to be a small room; long, but very narrow: raising my hand above my head, I could feel no roof. Bewildered, scared, I believe—for I really hardly know—that I began to scream, the conviction rushing suddenly over me that my light words had been awfully fulfilled—that I had found the hidden room, the existence of which nobody now believed in; perhaps too, to judge by the presence of these chests and sacks against the walls, I had found the missing treasure. My voice reëchoed drearily. No help came; no sound, no stir was to be heard. Never—never can I remember without a shudder the feeling of utter desolation which struck cold on my heart at that moment—the sense of being cut off from all human help, alone in the cruel unfriendly darkness, I knew not where. I think I *could almost* have gone mad; but, fortunately, the very

feeling that my senses were leaving me gave me strength to make one last strong effort to regain composure. First I heartily commended myself to the protection of God, and then I was able to recollect that, after all, my situation was more ludicrous than terrible. I must be in some unknown recess in the thickness of the wall—probably the outer wall—and, of course, though it might be a work of time to discover the spring which I must have unwittingly pressed, it would be easy to effect my deliverance by removing a panel. The housemaid would come to call me at eight or nine o'clock, and all I had to do was to reserve my voice, instead of screaming it away, so that I might make her hear and understand when she should enter the room. With this resolve I sank down on the ground where I was — somewhere in the middle of the little narrow cell—and stretching out my hand, I felt along one of the chests, if chests they were, to ascertain if it was to be trusted as a support for my back. O heaven! what, what met my hand? what was hanging down the side of the chest? My cold fingers closed on other fingers; stiff unyielding fingers; fleshless, bony. Something—I dared not think what—something which had probably been stretched along on the flat top of the chest, yielding to my frightened clutch, fell down close to me, almost over me, with a horrible rattle, which echoed drearily. Terror, sickening terror, overwhelmed me, and for the first time in my life I must have become entirely insensible; for I remember recovering by slow degrees the consciousness of where I was. When it all came back to me, my first impulse was to crouch up and draw my dress close round me, lest it should touch that horrible nameless thing. And then a fresh dread came over me. How long had my swoon lasted? Was it not very likely that the housemaid had come and gone while I was insensible and incapable of making her hear? If so, might not days, nay, weeks, *elapse before* any one entered the fatal room?

There was something too fearful in the idea that they might be searching for me everywhere, wondering at my disappearance, while I should be starving, dying, suffering all the agonies of a lingering torture, close to them. I thought of the poor bride in the old ballad of the 'Mistletoe Bough;' and the tears which I could not shed over my own situation began to flow freely at the recollection of a horror which was long over and past, if indeed it ever existed in real life. On, on, on crept the lingering hours, and I could not at last help feeling sure that my worst fears must be realised. Day must surely be come, though there was no day for me in my narrow tomb. It seemed as if the ball had happened ages ago, as if I must have been many, many hours shut up here. The intense cold which I felt, the thirst which burned my throat, the sinking weakness in all my limbs, strengthened this conviction. Were these the first beginnings of the slow agony which was to end in death?

The horror of this thought swept away all self-control, and I broke out into a frantic cry—

'Will no one help me?—will no one hear me? Oh! I can't—I can't die here!—die like this!' and I shrieked violently.

Oh! joy of joys! I was answered. Yes, there was a voice—a loud strong voice, though it sounded strangely muffled, and yet not very far off.

'What is it? What the deuce has happened? What is the matter?'

'Oh! is it Hugh? I am here, Hugh—I—Katie! Oh! do let me out.'

'Katie? Where on earth are you? Your voice seems to come out of the wall.'

'Yes, I am—I am in the wall: I do believe it is the hiding hole, and oh! I don't know what there is here—such horrors! Can't you take me out, Hugh—dear, dear *Hugh?*'

'Of course; but how the deuce did you ever get in?'

'From that dreadful room—Cousin Geoffrey's room. I was sleeping there instead of Bee.'

'Oh! then I had better go round to that room.' And his voice receded, leaving me greatly bewildered as to his present whereabouts. Just as the dreadful sense of loneliness began to creep over me again, I heard the joyous sound of tramping feet and opening doors, and then his dear cheery voice, always welcome,—how welcome now!—sounded from the opposite side and much more clearly. 'Speak, Katie; I can't tell the least where you are.'

'Oh! here, here! Oh! you won't leave me again, Hugh! I fell; I must have touched a spring. Where am I?'

'How uncommonly queer! My poor Katie! You are in the thickness of the outer wall, I fancy. Well! this is a funny state of things!'

In a minute he said, in a calm serious voice, which went a long way towards quieting my nerves,

'Kate, I must leave you for a few minutes. I might fumble here for ever before I touched the spring, as no doubt you happened to do. The best way will be to take out a panel, and for that I must get Adams and his tools. Luckily he has been sleeping here, because of all the ball carpentry. I sha'n't be away long, but probably he is not up, so it may take some minutes: ten perhaps.'

'Not up? What can the time be?'

'Just half-past six by my watch.'

'Not six in the morning? Oh! I thought I had been here for ages. I thought I must have missed the housemaid when she came to call me. Hugh—you're not gone, are you?'

'Not gone, but going.'

'But don't, don't!' I cried; 'if you are only away five minutes, I know it will seem an hour, and I can't bear it—I *can't indeed*;' and, ashamed as I was of my childish-

ness, I could not prevent my voice from dying away in a burst of sobs and tears. Hugh's answer came back in fond caressing tones, such as I had never heard from him before.

'My poor little darling Katie,' he said, 'you have had a cruel shock. We shall never forgive ourselves for what we have exposed you to. But you must be reasonable, dearest Katie, and trust me that I won't be one minute longer than I can help. I'm going now, my Katie—don't be afraid. You will be all right and safe in a very few minutes now.'

I heard his footsteps die away; but before I had time to become thoroughly nervous again I heard other feet and other voices gathering in the room, and speaking to me in tones of pity and consternation, but of amusement too, which did me great good; for in my feelings of horror and dismay, I had lost sight of the absurd side to my adventure. Beatrice was there, and I heard the Squire's good-tempered voice, and his wife's gentle tones; and then came back again the voice that I liked best of all, and soon I was aware that Adams was busy at the panel; and at last—oh, blessed moment!—I saw the light of their candles, and the familiar figures in all sorts of quaint deshabilles. I felt myself drawn out through the narrow aperture and upheld by Hugh's strong supporting arms, and, overwhelmed by the sudden sense of relief and safety, I let my head fall helplessly upon his shoulder, and I remember no more.

In a few moments I was conscious again, and found myself laid on the bed, Mrs. Pagonel and Beatrice attending on me, while the Squire and Hugh seemed to be intent on examining the contents of the mysterious cell which I had so strangely been the means of discovering. I heard exclamations of wonder and satisfaction, and then of dismay,—and then Mrs. Pagonel interposed, and said that *I must at once* be taken to some warmer and more cheer-

ful room. The Squire accordingly came forward to give me the support of his arm, but not before I had seen a look of sick horror on his broad ruddy face, and heard him mutter to Hugh, 'Horrible! Is it not well written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord"?'

All that day I was thoroughly upset; suffering from headache to such a degree that I could do nothing but lie still and endure. Towards evening, however, I fell into a deep sleep, from which I awoke to find myself out of pain; and drawing aside the bed-curtains—I was in Mrs. Pagonel's room—I was well pleased to see Beatrice sitting by the fire, presiding over a most tempting-looking tea equipage.

'O Katie, I am so sorry,' were her first words.

'There is nothing to be sorry for, Bee; it is all over, and I am quite well now,' I said, rising, and proceeding to twist up my hair and arrange my dress, and then seating myself in the armchair which she was drawing close to the fire for me; 'but do tell me; have I really found the hiding hole?'

'That you have,' answered Beatrice, handing me a cup of tea, which I enjoyed as never tea was enjoyed before; 'the hiding hole, and the treasure as well! Such hoards, Katie! chests and sacks full of coins, and all the jewels and plate of which we have the lists among our family papers, but which have always been missing, you know: O Katie, how can we thank you? This will put an end to papa's anxieties, I do believe!'

'Thank Heaven! Oh! that is worth all I went through. But, Bee, how came those treasures there, do you suppose? What can have become of the wretched man? I can't tell you what horrible fancies I had about him.'

'Are you sure they were fancies?' said Beatrice, very low: then as I looked questioningly at her, she said, with a shudder—

'Yes, *my poor dear* Katie; he must have really met

with the fate which you were afraid of. How it happened, of course, no one can say, and after all we may be jumping to a wrong conclusion; but a skeleton they have found there: surely it must be his—he must have starved to death in the midst of all the wealth he had hoarded.'

'Yes, and sold his soul for! Poor wretched man!' I answered, with a shiver: the whole subject was to me too painful for discussion, and when Bee added that one could hardly pity such a wicked man, I could not echo her words; the horror was only a vague unreal-seeming romance to her, seen through the mists of so many hundred years, but to me it was a frightful reality,—a thing of to-day.

I was not well enough to take part in the tenants' supper; but I came down into the little 'spirit chamber,' and there the guests visited me, one or two at a time. My last visitor was Hugh, who, as soon as he was released from his arduous task of proposing and responding to toasts, and keeping order among his tenants, came to ask how I was.

'You look dreadfully white, Katie,' he said, sitting down near me; 'not at all the better for your night in Cousin Geoffrey's room! How lucky it was that I could not sleep after the ball, and thought at last I'd go out before light, and try to get a shot at a wild duck!'

'Oh! that was how it was?'

'Yes: from my hearing your voice so plainly outside the house, I fancy there must be a shaft somewhere leading to the outer air—but we'll turn the place regularly out to-morrow. Poor Cousin Geoffrey! he's done us a good turn after all, hasn't he? and those bones of his shall have a Christian burial at last.'

I could not talk about this part of the subject; Hugh saw it, and went on quickly,

'And do you know that you've discovered a perfect mine of wealth for us? My father says a great portion

must go in charity before he can feel sure that it won't bring a curse with it: but even so, there'll be enough bullion to pay off this mortgage which has been worrying his life out.'

'I am so glad!'

'Ah! and what am I? I wonder if you have the least idea how wretched I have been this last few days.'

I felt that, weak and shaken as I was, I could not answer without beginning to cry, and in a moment Hugh went on:

'To-morrow, Katie, will you let me show you all the quaint old plate and the jewels? Such jewels! Miss Barnett may hide her diminished head for ever. But one of them I must show you now — I can't wait till to-morrow.'

He took my hand, and held over the third finger a diamond hoop, heavy and old-fashioned in setting, but the stones of great size and brilliancy.

'Katie dearest, we have been looking out these jewels in the lists which we have: shall I tell you the name by which this is described there? The "troth plight," the betrothal ring: it has been handed down as such evidently from one generation of us Pagonels to another. Katie, don't you and I belong naturally to each other? Won't you promise me not to go to India? May I not put this ring upon your finger?'

And so it was that Hugh was enabled to carry out his wish of decking his wife in jewels surpassing the Barnett diamonds, and this was what came of my terrible New-Year's-eve in Cousin Geoffrey's chamber.

DID I OFFEND?

BY HENRY S. LEIGH.

Did I offend? Pretty cousin, believe me,
Nothing on earth could be half so provoking;
Nothing on earth, pretty cousin, would grieve me
Nearly so deeply. But say, are you joking?
All very well, as a joke, to *pretend:*
Tell me sincerely, though, did I offend?

Only a kiss! Is it wrong to make merry
Just at the merriest season of seasons?
Take the cold weather, the lips, and the berry,
Not as excuses, but only as reasons.
Mistletoe, Christmas, and Beauty befriend
Sinners, if *I* be one. Did I offend?

Kisses, of course, I shall have by the dozen;
Kisses—but not of the kind that I value;
Not like the kiss of just now, pretty cousin.
Shall you forget it? Oh, answer me, *shall you?*
Ere you forget it you *must* condescend
Frankly to answer me; did I offend?

What are our games, and our gifts, and our dinner?
What are our mistletoe-boughs and our holly?
How, if I sneak through the day like a sinner,
How can the 'festive occasion' be jolly?
Do put my fears and my doubts at an end:
Look in my face, cousin—*did I offend?*

[DRAWN BY WILFRID LAWSON.]

DID I OFFEND?

THREE REMARKABLE CHRISTMAS-DAYS.

WHERE is the Englishman to be found who has not felt that he has lost a chapter out of life's duodecimo if he has passed a Christmas-day without in some sort distinguishing it from the other three hundred and sixty-four days? Where is the Christian who, either from motives of piety or the force of tradition and the early souvenirs of home, does not, on each recurring anniversary, endeavour to add to his own physical enjoyment or contribute to the gaiety of others? Whether in the arctic regions or the torrid zone, or away in the southern seas among the whalers, or wandering on the western prairies, the Englishman remembers the familiar words, 'A merry Christmas and a happy New Year.' They instinctively suggest themselves as the day comes round, and operate like magic upon his heart, suddenly reviving many a fond recollection of kindly greetings, affectionate pledges, and cheerful evenings before the crackling log. It is the happy lot of some men to pass the whole round of their lives within hail of the family circle, and once a year to meet the faces they love so well, and from which the pursuits of business may have separated them during the rest of the year. Others, again, are from an early period wanderers from the paternal home, and only revisit the scenes of their happy youth at long intervals, to find everything changed—'old manners gone,' and strangers filling the space once occupied by beloved and familiar faces. The writer of these lines may be numbered with the erratic. For forty long years he has been more or less away from the land of his fathers,

and his Christmas-days have rarely been distinguished by a participation in the festivities which are germane to the period, and agreeable to antique usage. *Au contraire*, he has passed some of his 'festivals' after a manner the reverse of agreeable, three striking illustrations of which fact opportunely present themselves. The reader will probably agree that they at least deserve the epithet, 'remarkable.'

CHRISTMAS-DAY IN THE TIGRIS.

I HAD been for some time residing at Bagdad, in 183-. Curiosity to visit a city rendered so famous by the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* led me (from India) first to visit Bassora, the Balsorah of the Thousand and One Nights, and then the city of the Caliph, whose fame has supplied the title to a pretty opera now rarely performed. And when I had supped sufficiently full of all the attractions of the quaint old city, which had not then involved its Turkish aspect in dark-blue woollen vestment and the scarlet fez, I made preparations for a journey across the desert to Damascus, for the Holy Land was the ultimate object of my travels. To effect this in safety, it was necessary to don the garment of an Arab, to allow the beard a few weeks' growth, and to study the phrases which would be requisite to help me on my perilous journey. My previous residence in India facilitated the acquisition of the accent, and I could soon pronounce the *Salaam Alee Koum* with orthodox accuracy. The science of eating a pilaw with my fingers, and tearing away pieces of roast lamb as if I had never known the use of knife and fork, was acquired after a little greasy practice, and I even learnt to toss off a noggin of raki with as much *sang froid* as if it had been a glass of Hodgson's pale ale. At length, having negotiated the hire of a horse and camel with the chief of a *cafilah* (caravan), and paid in advance for *protection*, I bade adieu to my old friend Colonel Taylor, the

British agent and resident, and set forth with some fifty companions, viz. three merchants, two moollahs, a special *tâtar*, my servant, a sheikh, and forty-two thieves under the denomination of pilgrims, returning from Mecca, and acting as guards of the merchandise. We had made a four days' journey, and had halted for the night in the desert at a spot where the camel-thorn was tolerably abundant. It was Christmas-eve. I had eaten a good supper of lamb, stewed in dried apricots, and taken my dram to the health of absent friends preparatory to a snooze, when my attention was attracted to a wailing cry in another part of the bivouac. I listened; gradually this was followed by a murmur, and then another cry, and soon the whole party was in a state of excitement very unusual among sober Mussulmans. I told my servant, Hummud, to go quietly and ascertain the cause. He was not long gone when he hurried back with tottering steps to tell me that THE PLAGUE had broken out in the caravan, and not a soul was safe. Two men were dying, one had died; others were sick, and all were apprehensive. I knew that the fatal disease of Asiatic cholera had appeared in the city just as we were leaving. Taking counsel with Hummud, I removed my rug and saddle-bags to some distance to windward of the whole party, and pondered the wisest course. It would never do to go on in fellowship with fell disease, and perhaps be left a corpse in the middle of the desert. It might be equally fatal to return. Before midnight, however, I resolved on the latter course, and saddling my horse I was soon on the way back alone, bidding Hummud follow on the camel. A few hours sufficed to accomplish, at a trot and a gallop, the distance which, walking with a caravan, required nearly four days (absolutely forty-eight hours of locomotion) to master.

Arrived at the principal gate of the city of Bagdad, horse and man equally jaded, I was about to enter, when

I found my ingress barred. The gate was closed, and from a wicket I was informed that the plague was in the town, and no one was permitted to enter until he had served twenty days' quarantine! Here was a situation—and on Christmas-day, too! It was in vain that I protested I was a friend of the resident's. Colonel Taylor had fled with his family to Bussorah, and the Armenian substitute did not know me. I offered money—I made promises—all in vain. I was doomed to hold high festival in the desert with the hungry vultures hovering above me, rather offering them a scanty meal than getting one myself. As evening approached (for I had arrived at the western gate in the middle of the day) I began to feel very nervous and somewhat faint. No one went into the city, and those who came out bore with them the dead, all recent victims of the terrible visitation. It was clear I could have no hope of ingress, even if it were safe to be in the infected place. I at once resolved to abandon the poor camel, and putting my servant behind me, we rode down to the banks of the river (Tigris) and sought a boat. Not one was to be seen! The people had fled to Bussorah in every available vessel. There were, however, we were told, some boats a few miles lower down the stream. We set off for the locality, but had not gone far before we came upon an encampment of Bedouins—thieves and murderers of the worst dye. With the keenness and rapidity of vultures, three or four of them, lance in rest, rushed out to stop, and of course to rob me. Resistance, I knew, would be futile. There was only one escape; I turned my horse's head to the stream, then a few yards off, and putting spurs to his flanks, leaped in, and was soon floating down with the rapid current, which the Arabs appropriately enough call the *'Djeer*, or javelin. The leap dislodged the faithful Hummud, and deposited him on the bank. Narrowly escaping the random shots of the Bedouins, and keeping close to the bank for an hour and

a half, I was carried down to a little cane-built village, where my horse was brought up (nothing else could have stopped the poor wretch) by a cluster of boats. We got on to the bank, and were hospitably treated; and I then made arrangements for a trip to Bussorah, after spending my *Christmas holiday in the Tigris.*

CHRISTMAS-DAY IN A LAZARETTO.

IN the winter of 183-, I had arrived at Odessa from Asiatic Turkey. The unlucky yellow flag, hoisted by command of the visiting surgeon of the port, compelled the brig I was in to toss about in the roadstead for a week before it was admitted to the mole or quarantine harbour. Then I was required to send my clothes for fumigation, and at the end of another week the authorities permitted me to land and take up my quarters in the lazaretto for fourteen days more, 'on *suspicion* of plague.'

The Odessa lazaretto is built in the form of a quadrangle. Each room is separated from its neighbour by a double wall, between which a sentinel takes his station, to see that neighbours hold no communication with each other. There is a small courtyard in front of each room; and a double iron grating—one row of grating a few feet before the other—keeps the prisoners from any personal tact with the outer world, represented by the restaurateur and his aids, the surgeon and the chaplain. In the room adjoining mine were confined a Greek and a young woman, who passed a portion of their time in singing to the music of a guitar, and occasionally a tambourine. Much of the rest was spent in eating, drinking, and sleeping, to judge from the long intervals of silence. But there were noisy episodes which conveyed strong proofs that the lady could scold as well as sing; and sometimes the quarrels rose to a terrible pitch, a thump, followed by a scream, furnishing the climax. It was Christmas-day. The snow fell heavily,

deadening the sound of the church bells, which, through a broken pane, reminded me of the holy festival. I expected to hear my neighbours sing hymns. My own time was devoted to my books—the only relief to an enforced solitude. Towards evening, while the guard slept, I distinctly heard the voice of the man Greek. He seemed to be growling rather than speaking, and in the intervals of his silence I heard the female sob. Not a *very* 'merry Christmas,' thought I. Sometimes one voice rose above the other—the one was shrill, the other loud and angry. Then there was a scuffle, then all was tranquil. Night had fallen, and I had hoped the parties had gone to sleep. But again the murmurs, the expostulations, the outbursts, disturbed my quiet. And now the woman became voluble, and spasmodic bursts of grief alone interrupted the torrent of her eloquence. Ever and anon the man called out what appeared to be 'Silence!' adding a few words (none of which were distinct enough to be caught) in a minatory tone. Then came another struggle, words—bitter words—stifled cries, a heavy fall, a scream—silence again.

I could not sleep: what had been the issue of the last quarrel? Had the 'peace and good-will' taught by the Redeemer, whose natal day the outer Christian world was celebrating, ultimately prevailed; and were the recent antagonists illustrating the Horatian maxim, that the falling out of lovers is the renewal of love? Or had the last fall so stunned the feebler of the two individuals as to render the revival of either love or anger temporarily impossible?

I was not long in doubt. It was past midnight, when I was awakened by dolorous cries and heavy sobs, vehement protestations and earnest apostrophes in the voice of the man. I knocked loudly at the wall to suggest silence. He evidently did not heed the knocking. I called out, in good Italian, 'Be quiet.' It was of no avail. I roused up the guard, and asked him what was the matter

with the gentleman. My custodian suggested he was drunk. I could not, however, divest my mind of the idea that a deed of darkness had been perpetrated.

The night wore away. I could not sleep. I no longer heard the voice of the woman—even the man's voice was hushed; but, instead of the usual sounds, my ear was assailed with knockings on the floor, and a noise as of a saw or file at work. When the restaurateur came round in the morning to take orders for breakfast I told him what I had heard, and suggested that the lady might be ill, and need medical aid. He went next door, but was sent away with the intimation that nothing was wanted. Two or three more days elapsed: the time had arrived for my release. On the very day indeed when I was to be emancipated, my neighbours were also to be freed. I heard the officers arrive next door. Some words were uttered, followed by an altercation; then the man cried bitterly. What could be the matter? More officers came; the man was fettered and taken away. Where was the woman? He had stabbed her in his anger; and, under some absurd notion that her existence would be forgotten by the authorities, he had taken up two planks, and deposited the dead body of the poor girl beneath them. This explained the operations which followed upon the silence. When I was released I saw my quondam neighbour sitting in a verandah of the place where I went to reclaim my fumigated apparel, guarded by two soldiers. He was a little old man, of malignant aspect. I remembered having seen him on the mole with a handsome young Greek, whom I supposed to be his child. No one knew exactly what their relative position was. It was enough that he had shed her blood on Christmas-night.

A CHRISTMAS GALE.

It was in the African summer of 1826. We were rounding the Cape of Good Hope in the good ship Nancy Lee, whereof James M'Culloch was master, on our voyage from Bombay to Liverpool. I was the only passenger. The voyage had been tedious, for the bottom of the vessel was covered with barnacles, and the captain was not a very entertaining or instructive mariner. He did not smoke, because he feared it would destroy the *emmanuel* of his teeth; he hoped to be *enumerated* by his employers for certain extra duties he had performed; he thought sea-sickness was nothing when a man was *manured* to it; and so on. These malapropisms sufficiently illustrate the extent of his literary attainments. He had one mate, Smith by name, whose only diversion during the watch below was a daring attempt to conquer 'Life let us cherish' on a one-keyed flute. I was consequently cast upon my own resources. The table was not very luxuriantly supplied, but there was always a sufficiency; and on Christmas-day we had an extra feast. The preserved salmon came in aid of the roast pork and plum-pudding, and some excellent claret was added to the usual vinous accompaniment. We dined at three o'clock. The weather was beautiful; all sail was set, and we were congratulating ourselves upon so propitious a 'double' of the terrible Cape of Storms. The captain had made liberal distribution of extra grog, and all went merrily. By five o'clock we had indulged in so many cheerful libations, and were, in fact, so very jolly, that we did not perceive that the wind had dropped to a calm; neither were we very sensible of a sudden change in the motion of the vessel, until a heavy lurch to larboard sent bottles and glasses on to the deck of the cuddy. The captain looked up at the barometer over his head, turned deadly pale, and staggered out on to the quarter-deck. Mr. Smith was asleep on the poop;

the crew, with the exception of one sick man, were drunk and quarrelling. The position was perilous in the extreme. Crack! and the main-royal with its yard and sail flapped against the top-gallant. The captain staggered to the halyards, and called out, as loud as he could, 'Let go everything!' The wind became fiercer each moment; the jib was torn to shreds; the mizen-royal went; the vessel was almost on her beam ends. I rushed out, and aided the captain in 'letting go,' and went among the ship's company, to urge them to reef and furl and get down the shattered masts,—all to no purpose. Only one or two were sufficiently in their senses to make an effort to do their duty. I jumped upon the poop and shook Smith out of his lethargy. He stared, bewildered for some moments; and when he seemed to realise the condition of things he began to bawl and use his whistle (for he was bos'n as well as mate), and wondered that no notice was taken of it. The sea had now risen considerably, and every now and then heavy seas dashed against the Nancy Lee, or swept clean over her. By great efforts the 'letting go' had been accomplished, and every yard being loosened, the sails flopped about tremendously, breaking from their lifts and braces. The man at the helm, who ought to have been relieved two hours previously, now declared he could hold on no longer—the pressure upon the rudder was beyond his powers. He called for some comrade to take his place; he was unheeded. So, in his desperation, he made the wheel fast, and went forward—only to drink his share of the liquor, which had been put into his keg for him. The captain was frenzied; he stamped, swore, prayed, invoked, ordered,—all to no purpose. Out of a crew of fourteen, only four persons, myself included, were fit to do anything. The elements took advantage of our helplessness, and made terrible havoc with everything on and above deck. Happily the hatches were hermetically closed, to protect the cargo. The foretopmast, unable to

bear the strain, now went, and in its fall killed a sailor, who bore the rather inappropriate sobriquet of 'Happy Jack.' The men became frantic. One went up aloft to cut loose the main-royal, which still hung by some cordage to the lower stem. He got up with difficulty, and effected his purpose. The mast fell on the deck and struck Mr. Smith: he staggered towards the gangway and fell overboard. I screamed with affright and rushed to the side. A rope that hung below the main-chains had caught him as the vessel heeled over; but, instead of proving his salvation, it aided his destruction, for I saw his poor body swinging to and fro, striking the ship's side with force enough to kill him if he had ten lives. To shorten the story, the gale slackened at midnight, and a dead calm rapidly ensued. We had then nothing but the rolling of the helpless ship to trouble us. But to what a miserable wreck was the full moon witness! If the awful struggle had sobered all hands, it was only to make them wish themselves drunk, for none could contemplate the frightful wreck which had resulted from the common indulgence without remorse. Every effort was now made to repair damages; but although two months more elapsed before we entered the Mersey, our condition was so dilapidated that, in spite of the efforts made by the old skipper to tell a good story to his owners, they mulcted him and the crew of all that was due, and resolved that, in future, no more such 'merry Christmases' should be passed by poor M'Culloch in their service. He died a broken-hearted mariner, laying Smith's death to his own soul, and declaring that nothing on earth could 'enumerate' him for what he suffered. His long hard life at sea had not 'manured' him to disasters which involved the lives of his shipmates.

CHRISTMAS SMILES AND CHRISTMAS TEARS,

Or the Story of the Pantaloon's Daughter.

BY ANDREW HALLIDAY.

I AM a call-boy, and I have been a call-boy ever since I was ten. I am five-and-forty now, and getting old and grizzled, but still a call-boy, and I daresay I shall remain a call-boy to the end of my days. In my line we never

grow to be men. It's always 'boy' to the last, if we were to live to be as old as Methuselah. It was the same with the postboys. They were nearly always little chaps, and in their caps and jackets looked just like juveniles. I have heard it was gin taken with their pap that did it in their case—I mean stopped their growth. In ours I think it's owing to the gas. I should say I have lived pretty nigh twenty years of my life by gaslight. I go to the theatre every night at six o'clock and never leave until twelve, and most of the time I stand under the reflector on the first landing of the dressing-room staircase. It's monotonous kind of work to stand there night after night for so many hours, listening to the pieces that I know all by heart, and calling up-stairs to the actors when they're wanted to go on. It's dry work, too; for the gas is very hot, and the dust comes up from the stage when they change the scenes. I have seen a good deal of life, though, from that landing; and I am sorry now that I did not begin to keep a diary five-and-twenty years ago. It would have been worth something to publish by this time. There's not many that have been so long in the line as I have. Call-boys mostly become low comedians or clowns. You see, they stand a very good chance if they have any talent and ambition. They're always on the spot if anything happens, and they know all the parts from hearing them night after night. Perhaps an actor is taken ill some night at the last moment, and the stage is waiting. What's to be done? There is nobody who knows the part. Well, the call-boy hears all this, and if he has any pluck in him he says, 'I know the part—I don't mind going on for it;' and perhaps at that moment the audience is getting very impatient, and the manager says, 'Very well, get into the things, and look sharp;' and on he goes, and perhaps makes a hit. After that you may depend upon it he will not be content to be a call-boy; and perhaps the manager is only too glad of a chance of playing

him off, cheap, against the leading man. Lots of call-boys have got on in this way, but most of them have become pantomimists. Call-boys are generally good at hanky-panky. I might have been a clown myself, for I have practised all clown's tumbling tricks on my landing during what I call my waits. But I never had any ambition, leastwise no spirit; and so it is that I have never risen.

Still for all that, there are persons of less importance in the theatre than me. In my own way I have a good deal of influence, and know more of what is going on than any one. Everybody in the theatre, from the supers and ballet-girls up to the manager himself, has to pass under my eye on their way up to the dressing-rooms, and as they all depend upon me for their 'calls,' they are all civil. 'Good-evening, Robert;' 'How are you to-night, Robert?' I get that from everybody, even from the manager himself, who, though he has bullied everybody else in the theatre, has never bullied me. That's one of the advantages of being call-boy. I am a sort of neutral in the place. Nobody is jealous of me; and my position at the bottom of the stairs gives me opportunities of doing many people favours. The tip-top members of the company will come to me sometimes and say, 'Robert, is he in his room?' meaning the manager. I know pretty well what they want to see him about—a reëngagement, a benefit, a new part, or something of that sort—and I say, 'Yes, he is in his room; but he is in an awful bad temper to-night.' And they understand what that means, and don't go near him. And then again another time I will say, 'Do you want to see him?' and they'll say, 'Yes;' and then I'll say, 'You'll find him in his room; there's nobody with him, and he's in a first-rate temper to-night.' And they say, 'Thank you, Robert,' and perhaps drop me sixpence or a shilling to wash the dust out of my throat; for I always tell everybody that passes that it's very dry at that corner.

Ah! I'll be bound to say I have saved many a poor girl her engagement by sending her up just at the right time. I always know by his face what sort of a tune the manager is in, and he can't get up to his room without passing me.

Perhaps you wouldn't believe it now; but I have been the making of one or two dramatic authors in my time. Managers don't care much about dramatic authors, and always keep out of their way if they can. Even such as have the *entrée* behind the scenes can't always get at the manager. The doorkeeper has the same sort of favour for a dramatic author that a watch-dog has for a burglar. If an author asks for the manager at the stage-door, he is almost certain to be told that he is not in the house. But if he comes to me and behaves civil, I can put him in the way of getting what he wants—which is a quiet minute or two with the manager to talk about his piece. I remember a young man coming to me night after night to ask for him, but as he was a stranger to me, I always said the manager was engaged, or wasn't in, or some bit of that sort, which it is part of the duty of theatre officials to tell. At last, however, my heart softened towards him, for he was a polite, kind-spoken young man, and always carried a roll of paper in his breast-pocket, which I guessed was a play of some kind which he wanted produced. One night when I sent him away with the usual answer he looked so disappointed that I felt for once quite ashamed of having told the usual lie. When he came again the manager was really not in; but I told him to go and sit in the green-room, and I would let him know when he came. He did so, and when the manager arrived I took the young man up to his room and knocked at the door, and left him there to manage the rest for himself. He remained in the room nearly half an hour, and when he came down his cheeks were flushed and his eyes sparkled, and he shook me kindly by the hand and thanked me. A short time afterwards he had a piece produced at our house. It was

a great success, and he has had many successes since at our house and others. You know his name very well; all the town knows it; but perhaps it would never have been known at all but for me. However, he is welcome to all I did for him; for he is a gentleman, and is not above leaving the big folks and coming and offering his hand to Robert the call-boy, and asking him what he'll take to wash the dust down. I have known others again come to me in a grand bumptious sort of way that I wouldn't have moved a finger to serve. I might have helped them to what they wanted many a time, if they had only been a little civil and treated the call-boy like a fellow-creature.

Ah, sir, I have seen some very real life behind these canvas scenes. Grief and suffering and pain have many a night passed up those stairs when you have seen all smiling and light-hearted in front. The friends and acquaintances of my life have been made on this landing under the reflector. (I am speaking as if I were standing there now.) I have known them here, mixed with them here, conversed with them here, and nowhere else. This strip of boarding and these stairs have been my world. And friends and acquaintances that I have made here have grown old, and seen joy and sorrow, and passed away to the grave, and I have missed them only in their relation to these stairs, which they have gone up and down o' nights in their paint and strange dresses.

In all my time there was only one person belonging to the theatre that I knew outside it, and that was old Peter Doyle the Pantaloon. He lived near me over the water, close to the Vauxhall-walk; and at pantomime time we used to walk home together. Peter's poor bit of a lodging over yonder was the scene of a drama in real life that I have never seen equalled on the stage, and I have seen a few dramas in my time, as you may believe. Peter had been Pantaloon at our house for years, and he continued to be engaged for Christmas long after he was past his work.

He was like Herr von Joel, and was retained on the establishment in consideration of his long and faithful services. But a Christmas came when even long and faithful services would no longer balance Peter's infirmity, which was a lame leg, and he was told when he sent in his application that he wouldn't be wanted. I was sorry for Peter, for he was a great crony of mine, and he had a wife and family to keep, the youngest, a girl, being only nine years of age. You see Peter was not such a very old man, but he had had a bad accident in the country from falling through a trap, and that and rheumatism crippled him; and as you can imagine, a crippled Pantaloon ain't much use. I missed Peter sadly, for he dressed in a little room close by my landing, and I often used to run in and have a chat with him. He had all sorts of queer ways, and no end of funny stories to tell. You may know what a quaint kind of character he was when I tell you how he used to get his supper. The people about the neighbourhood all knew him, for Peter was fond of looking in at their shop-windows and chatting to them, though he never bought much. The butcher round the corner was a particular friend of Peter's, and always cut him a good big quarter of a pound of steak, and didn't charge him too much for it. But one night Peter was rather short of the browns, as he called them. He had only threepence. 'What am I to do, Robert?' he said; 'if I pay for the steak I shall have nothing left for the buster and the beer.' He always called a penny loaf a 'buster.'

'Well,' I said, 'stick it up, Peter.'

'No, no, lad,' said Peter; 'I don't like getting into debt; it's against my principle, and, as somebody said, my interest. No, that won't do; but here, I'll tell you what —take that penny, and ask the old woman'—that was the old woman who did the 'cleaning'—'to go round and give my compliments to Mr. Collins, and ask him for a penn'orth of meat for my dog.'

'But you haven't got a dog, Peter,' I said.

'Oh yes, I have,' he said; 'a regular performing dog—sits up on his hind legs all day long, and always ready for his victuals. You just see how he'll put away the penn'orth of meat.'

Well, I gave the old woman Peter's penny, and sent her round, and she came back with a great piece of beef as big as my hand.

'There's a penn'orth, Peter,' I said.

'By Jove, yes,' he said; 'that's more than I get for threepence for myself. That's "love me, love my dog," and no mistake. Where's the gridiron?' And Peter put the gridiron on the fire and cooked the beef; and when I came in again presently I found him eating it.

'You see the animal feeding,' said Peter; 'will you have a bit? It's my belief he's cut it off the rump, for it's as tender as a chicken.' After this Peter never sent for a quarter of a pound for himself, but always for a penn'orth for his dog.

It was a sad blow to Peter when he got the manager's letter; for he had counted on his engagement as usual, and had made all his little arrangements. However, the company subscribed a little money for him, and the manager offered to take his little daughter Rose on for a fairy in the pantomime. Peter was doatingly fond of Rose. She was the youngest of his family, and the only girl; the others being great louts of boys who always kept the poor old chap in hot water. Peter did not much like his little darling going on the stage without some one to look after her; but when the manager told him that he might come to the theatre every night and look after her himself, he was reconciled to it, and little Rose was engaged. It was a matter of no consequence except to Peter himself, for Rose only went on in a group of little fairies, and there was a whole regiment of mothers waiting every morning at the stage-door with no end of little candidates for such

parts. It was, however, of very great consequence to Peter; for Rose was engaged at a salary of seven shillings a week—they gave her more than the usual figure for her father's sake—and as Peter was doing nothing, this helped to keep the pot a-boiling. For the matter of that I fully believe that all that went into Peter's pot that winter came out of Rose's seven shillings.

Little Rose was very quick at learning, and the ballet-master took a fancy to her, and put her in the front row; and the people in front soon began to notice her, she was so pretty. Peter brought her to the theatre every evening, and came again when the pantomime was over and took her home; but he rarely came in. He didn't like to be 'behind' with us all, knowing that he was no longer one of us, and had nothing to do in the theatre. He used to wait at a public-house close by where he was well known, and it didn't cost him much for his beer there. There was a lot of young fellows frequented the house who felt it a privilege to treat Peter. Peter would no sooner go in and show his comical face than it would be—'What will you take, Peter?' from half a dozen of them at once. And Peter would answer in his quaint way, 'Well, since you are so kind, I will take two D of gin cold, and a little leaf;' which meant twopennyworth of cold gin-and-water and a paper of tobacco.

But to go on with my story. At the end of the run of the pantomime little Rose was discharged, with many more whose services would not be required until Christmas came round again. Peter was thrown on his beam ends. Now that Rose's salary was gone there was nothing coming in at all. Peter began to look about for something to do. He offered himself at one or two of the minor theatres for utility business; but his lameness was against him, and no one would have him. He tried to get pupils for the stage, but most of the amateurs aspired to the higher walks of the drama, and who would go to a

broken-down Pantaloon to learn to read Shakespeare? Then he thought of setting up a photographic shop; but the expense of the glass house and the apparatus was more than he could manage. Peter could find nothing to turn his hand to, and he took it very much to heart, and became low and desponding. At length, however, something turned up. He came to me one Sunday morning with a bright face to tell me all about it.

'Robert,' he said, 'I've met with an opening at last.'

I said I was glad to hear it, and asked what it was.

'What do you think, Robert?'

'Can't say, I'm sure,' I said; 'anything in your own line?'

'No, not exactly,' he said.

'Elocution?'

'No.'

'Photographs?'

'No; but you'll never guess, Robert. What do you say to the darky business?'

'The darky business!' I said; 'whatever do you mean, Peter?'

'Why,' he said, 'the nigger-serenading line.'

'Lor', Peter,' I said; 'you must be joking.'

'Not a bit of it,' he said; 'you know I can play the banjo; and I've an offer to join a troupe; and why not? I must do something to support my family.'

'How did you hear of it?' I said.

And then he told me all about it.

'You know the chap with the wooden leg that lodges at the sweep's next door but one. You've often seen him playing the tambourine in a band of niggers. Well, yesterday I saw him coming along, with his face washed, and dressed in his best Sunday-going suit; and I said, knowing him from being a neighbour—

'"Halloa, William! what's up?"

'"I am going to bury the banjo," he says.

'"Bury the banjo?" I says; "whatever do you mean, William?"

'"Oh," he says, "Joe Barton, as played the banjo in our band, is dead; and we're going to bury him to-day down at Woking. It's a bad job for us. I don't know what we shall do without him."

'What Bill said set me a-thinking, and I watched for him when he came back in the afternoon. I saw that he was a bit screwed as he came by, and I did not speak to him then; but I called in at his lodgings after tea, and found him sitting in a chair, with his head resting in his hands.

'"You're not very well, William," I said.

'"No," he said; "I can't help thinking of poor Joe as we laid under the earth to-day. I took a goodish drop to drink on the road home; but it hasn't improved my spirits, but rather the contrairy. Joe and me were great friends—brothers, I may say. He left me all that belonged to him. There's the legacy in the corner there; I sha'n't have to pay duty on it."

'The legacy was Joe's serenading clothes—a long-tailed blue coat, a pair of bed-curtain trousers, and a white hat with crape round. They lay in a heap, with poor Joe's banjo on the top.

'I took up the instrument, and ran my fingers over the strings. Bill took no notice for a minute or so, until I began to play "Uncle Ned," when he looked up at me curiously.

'"By Jove!" he said, "you can play it."

'"Yes," I said; "I can a little; but I am rather out of practice. If I could get anything to do at it I should soon get my hand in again."

'"What!" he said, "you don't mean to say that *you*—"

'"Why not?" I said; "I can't get anything to do in my own line, and beggars mustn't be choosers; besides, I think I rather should like the line."

'"You would?" he said eagerly.

'"Yes," I said, "I would."

'"What do you say, then, to joining us, and taking poor Joe's place?"

'I said, "I'm your man."

'Well, the upshot of it was that Bill introduced me to the other members of the troupe, and I played a tune or two to them, and they said I would do with a little practice; and to-morrow night I am going to rehearse with them at Bill's lodgings, and the day after we open for the season. And now what do you think of it?'

'Well,' I said, 'Peter, it's honest; and I daresay there's a good bit of money to be picked up at it.'

'Yes,' he said, 'there is; Bill told me that one rainy day about a month ago they plâyed the whole of an afternoon up a court in the Strand, and took two pound fourteen. The only thing that troubles me is the wife.'

'How do you mean?' I said.

'Well,' he said, 'she mightn't like it. Her father, you see, was a master pork-butcher in the Walworth-road, and she's rather proud.'

'Well,' I said, 'I wouldn't tell her about it for a bit.'

'No,' he said, 'that's just how I mean to act. I'll keep it dark as long as I can; and perhaps the ha'pence will reconcile her.'

So Peter joined the troupe, and went to work, and did very well. Dressed up as a darky, with his face blacked, nobody recognised him but me; and of course I kept the secret. His wife, however, after a bit began to wonder how he got all the money; for he sometimes took home as much as seven or eight shillings for a day's work. Peter put her off as long as he could; but she got to close quarters with him at last, for she was proud and honester than most in her station. Peter told me all about how she found him out. She was quite huffed with him because he would not tell her what he did; and one night, when

they had quarrelled and made it up again, she said to him with tears in her eyes—

'I hope you are not a thief, Peter dear?'

Peter laughed at first at the idea of the thing; but got indignant at last, and told her that his employment was honest, though humble—very humble.

'Very humble,' she said; 'then I know what it is, Peter.'

'Well, what?' he said.

'Why,' she said, 'I have noticed that every night when you come home you have a black rim all round your neck, and smudges of black about your ears. You don't like to tell me, Peter, but I know what you have done; you have turned chimney-sweep.'

Peter could not help roaring with laughter at this; but the wife and he got so thick that night that he was obliged to confess. She didn't like it, and talked a good deal about her father the pork-butcher; but when Peter turned out his pockets, she dried her tears, and they had a nice hot supper, and agreed to say nothing more about it, and keep the secret from little Rose.

Peter did very well in the summer-time; but in the winter it was all over with the outdoor nigger-serenading business. The troupe had then to look out for engagements at parties; but there were not many of them to be got. So Peter was very thankful when little Rose was taken on again at the theatre to play in the pantomime. She was engaged to play a fairy, and represent the Queen of the Flowers in the transformation scene. As she had to stand upon a piece of wood that rose through the stage nearly to the flies, Peter came in every night to see her securely strapped on; and then he would wait chatting with me until the scene was over and little Rose was ready to go home. One night, however, Peter had an engagement, and did not come. As bad luck would have it little Rose got very nervous, let go her hold upon the

iron bar, and fell head downwards, hanging to the scene by her strapped foot. The accident occurred just as the curtain was coming down upon the red fire; and the people in front knew nothing about it. I was the first to run to Rose's assistance. Poor thing! she was badly bruised and cut with the projecting pieces of the scene, and her arms were bleeding. A carpenter held her up while I unstrapped her foot, and we took her into the housekeeper's room and laid her on a sofa. The manager came in in great excitement, and was for sending her to the hospital; but little Rose when she recovered a little asked for her father, and said she would rather go home. Peter not being there, the manager asked if any one knew where he lived; and I said I did.

'Very well,' he said; 'you get a cab and take her home, and send for a doctor at my expense. I don't think now she is so much hurt as frightened.'

So a cab was called, and little Rose was helped into it; and I went away home with her, leaving word with the stage-doorkeeper to find out Peter and let him know what had happened.

Mrs. Doyle was in a terrible way when I took the poor girl home, and cried and wrung her hands in great distress. However, when she heard Rose speak she stirred up a little, and undressed her and put her to bed, while I ran out for the doctor. The doctor—a very young man—came in directly; but when he saw Rose, and I told him the nature of the accident, he said she ought to be taken to the hospital at once, as it was very serious. Mrs. Doyle, however, would not hear of this; and the doctor said in that case he must call in another surgeon; and giving some directions to Mrs. Doyle, he hurried away for that purpose. Mrs. Doyle was now very much alarmed. Rose lay in the bed as pale as death, her eyes closed and her white lips slightly parted. There were no signs of life about her except the red scores upon her arms, which had

been bruised and torn by the rough woodwork of the platform from which she had fallen.

'Good God!' Mrs. Doyle exclaimed, 'she is dead!'

At that moment there was a noise of hurried footsteps on the stairs, and some one entered. It was Peter in his nigger serenader's dress, with his face blacked, and his banjo in his hand. He caught the terrible word 'dead,' and rushed to the bedside. He threw his hat and his banjo from him, and dropped upon his knees, taking Rose's cold white hand in his.

'My Rose! my dear darling Rose!' he cried; 'dead! No, no, no; it cannot be! Rose, Rose, speak to me, darling! speak to me!'

In his frantic energy he pulled the poor girl towards him, but her body was like a dead thing, and when he relaxed his hold upon her hand it fell upon the counterpane like lead.

Peter rose as if suddenly horrorstruck, and sank into a chair. He sat there for some moments speechless, gazing in a stupefied way at his darling's blanched and motionless face, and the big tears rolled from his eyes and made white courses down his blackened face as they fell. At length he started up wildly, and cried, 'Yes, yes, she is dead, and it was I who killed her; I, her father! I was not there to see her safe to-night, as I ought to have been. If I had been there this would not have happened. I—I have done it!' And he sank into the chair again, and hid his face in his hands and sobbed like a child.

It was a strange pitiful sight to see—a father in that fantastic dress, associated only with mockery and antics and nonsense, sitting there crushed and broken and weeping.

But Rose was not dead. When the doctors came in and gave her a restorative, she revived and opened her eyes. Peter was for rushing to clasp her in his arms, but I held him back, pointing to his dress.

'You will only frighten her, Peter,' I said; 'she has never seen you like this.' But he would not listen, and rushed to the bedside. Rose saw the strange figure, and shrank back and uttered a feeble scream. Peter turned away immediately, and ran from the room, tearing the fantastic rags from his body as if he had been mad. He came back presently, his face hastily washed, and in his own clothes. Rose had revived in the mean time, and she knew him now, and gladdened poor Peter's heart with a smile and the whispered word 'father.' He was frantic with joy. But he had still a bitter grief in store for him. His darling Rose, his pet, his pride, the hope of the family —nay, its stay and support—was crippled for life.

Poor Peter's prospect was now a very dark one; but things came round in a strange way to bring help to him and happiness to others. What I am going to tell now came to my knowledge as I stood on my landing at the bottom of the stairs. After Rose's accident, the actors and actresses, as they went up and down, constantly asked me about her, and nearly every one of them sent her a little money. Actors are very kind-hearted in that way. But of all the persons in the theatre, no one took so much interest in Rose as Miss Everton. You remember what a favourite Miss Everton was at this theatre some few years ago. When she came here from the country she took everybody by storm, for she was not only a very clever actress, but she was very handsome and very pretty. All the young fellows about town were mad after her, and they filled the stalls night after night to see her. I took a great liking to Miss Everton from the first, for she was always very friendly and very chatty, and her success made no difference in her. But I trembled for her sometimes, when I saw how she was run after by the young swells. I knew that she was in the midst of a great blazing fire of temptation, for the stage-door was beset every night by her admirers, and a fast young baronet, who

was privileged to come behind the scenes, fairly laid siege to her, and brought her all sorts of expensive presents. One night it was a ring, and the next a pair of bracelets; and she always showed them to me as she came up-stairs, and how her eyes did sparkle over them, woman-like! But I knew that these presents boded no good to her, for the young baronet was a notorious rake. However, I was glad to believe, from what I saw, that she kept them all at a safe distance, until one night I overheard a conversation between her and Sir William in the green-room. As I stood close to the green-room door, and they talked pretty loud, I could not help overhearing what they said. Miss Everton was dressed to go home, and I heard her say:

'I must bid you good-night, Sir William.'

'No, no; don't go yet,' he said. 'I can't bear to part with you.'

'Oh, but I must,' she said; 'it's getting late.'

'So it is,' he said; 'and you are going alone?'

'Yes,' she said. 'I always go alone.'

'That's not right,' he said. 'You are too young, too beautiful; allow me to be your squire.'

She said gaily that she couldn't think of it; but he pressed her, and praised her beauty, and said he loved her to distraction, and acted the false part that he had acted many a time before. I stood in fear and trembling, and could hear my heart beat within me; for Miss Everton was not protesting now, and presently I heard her say, in a resolute way, as if she had made up her mind, 'Very well, Sir William, you shall be my squire to-night; you shall see me home.'

I have often wondered why those words should have given me such pain. I felt them like a stab in the heart. I can only suppose that I was in love, in a humble way, with Miss Everton myself.

Miss Everton and Sir William came out, and he gave

her his arm, and as she passed me, she said 'Good-night' quite gaily, and her face was flushed, and her eyes sparkled as if in triumph.

I felt cold at heart, and could have cried. The poor moth!

I never had any ambition until that moment, and then I wished that I were manager, that I might say to Miss Everton—'Remain here, I wish to speak to you.' But she passed out, leaning on Sir William's arm.

What followed is no secret now.

Sir William called a cab, and they got into it together; but when they had proceeded a little way, Miss Everton called to the man to stop at a pastrycook's shop. She got out, saying to Sir William that she was going to buy something for supper. Sir William of course offered to pay, but she would not allow him. She insisted upon buying and paying for everything herself. She bought a fowl, a shape of jelly, and a bottle of wine, and giving directions to the driver, got into the cab again.

'Oh, sha'n't we be jolly!' said Sir William.

'It will be quite a treat, won't it?' said Miss Everton.

'And with you to grace the meal—' Sir William was proceeding with a fine speech, when he noticed that the cab was going across one of the bridges.

'I thought, Miss Everton,' he said, 'you lived at St. John's Wood.'

'Yes,' she said, 'I live there with my mother; but I have a friend over the water.'

'Ah, I see,' said Sir William, delighted.

The cab turned through some narrow dirty streets.

'Your friend, my dear Miss Everton,' said Sir William, 'does not appear to live in a very aristocratic quarter of the town.'

'No,' she said; 'but my friend has good reasons for that.'

'Oh, I see,' said Sir William. 'Well, I'll bet a wager she is not so pretty as you are.'

'Yes, Sir William, she is prettier.'

'Oh, nonsense, I won't believe that,' he said.

'Well, Sir William, you shall judge for yourself; we are there.'

The cab had stopped at a dark and narrow passage.

Miss Everton paid the cabman, and told Sir William to follow her. He was too much astonished now to offer to pay for her, or to do anything but stare in wonder.

'It is very dark here,' said Miss Everton; 'but I know the way; take my hand, and I will conduct you.'

At another time Sir William would have been enraptured to take her hand, but he half hesitated now.

'What,' she said, 'are you afraid to take my hand and follow me?'

'No, no,' he said gaily; 'but it seems so odd, you know. I could not of course imagine that you had friends here.'

Miss Everton knocked at a door at the end of the passage. It was opened by an elderly woman, who recognised her, and mentioned her by name. Miss Everton gave her a significant look, and said aloud, 'I have brought a friend; can we go up-stairs?'

The woman said 'Yes,' and held the light while Sir William and Miss Everton went up, the former wondering at the bare walls and the general poverty-stricken aspect of the place. At the top of the stairs, Miss Everton knocked at a latched door, and a man's voice said, 'Come in.'

They entered, Miss Everton still leading Sir William by the hand. It was a poorly-furnished bed-chamber, in the corner of which, on a truckle-bed, lay a sick child, while an old man sat by the bedside watching her.

'I have come to see little Rose, Peter,' Miss Everton said. 'And I have brought a friend who has often inquired for her.'

And then she went up to little Rose and kissed her, and asked her if she was better; and Rose smiled and thanked her, and said she was much better now.

'And see, Rose,' she said, 'a kind gentleman has come to see you; he has brought a chicken for you, and a jelly, and some wine; you must take some now, it will do you good.'

And she went and took the things from Sir William, and spread a cloth upon the bed, and fed Rose with her own hands. And Sir William sat in a chair gazing at her, saying never a word, and making no sign, until his eyes filled with tears, when he rose and turned away to hide

them. Those were tears of grace. They made that rake and libertine a man. When her mission of love and charity was over, Miss Everton took him by the hand once more, and led him down old Peter's poor stairs and out into the dark dirty street. And there, under heaven, he fell down on his knees before her, and humbly kissed her hand, and said, 'Lady, forgive me!'

Very shortly afterwards, Miss Everton quitted the stage and became Lady William Hartley. She is a happy wife and mother now, and Sir William is a happy husband, and they have not forgotten old Peter and his crippled daughter Rose. Who knows how it might have been but for the misfortune of that poor little Christmas Fairy!

CHRISTMAS AT SUNNYMEADE HALL.

OR COUNTRY COUSINS AT HOME.

THE old Christmas customs were carefully observed at Sunnymeade, the beautiful country home of the Woodbine family.

There were only two unwelcome guests under its hospitable roof. Care and Anxiety (the ill-favoured pair, whose presence casts a shadow over so many domestic hearths at every Christmastide) were secretly entertained, although outwardly ignored, by each individual member of the domestic circle.

Hand in hand they made their way into the private chamber of the gentle mother of the family, who, as she mused over the cheerful fire in her own dressing-room, felt their dull heavy presence at her heart, while with cruel fingers they drew hard lines across her aching and hitherto unwrinkled brows.

'Dear, dear Sunnymeade!' she sighed, rather than said, softly to herself—'the last Christmas, the very last;' and unaccustomed to the weight of the burden, which she had carried in her breast for that whole day, and, indeed, for weeks previously, she gave way suddenly to a torrent of bitter tears. She was not aware that the faithful companion of the sunny hours that had made every succeeding Christmas at Sunnymeade more sweet than the last was within earshot of her heavy sobs, until a strong gentle hand was laid upon her shoulder, and a loving but faltering voice said tenderly—

'This must not be, Bessie; this is the only thing which I cannot bear. For better, for worse, remember, my love,' as he wiped the tears from the comely cheeks of his wife, with the gentleness of a bridegroom, and the gallantry of a highly-bred gentleman of the old-fashioned and now, alas! well-nigh extinct school of manners.

'There is no sting in the worst, after all,' said Mrs. Woodbine, smiling through her tears, 'as long as I have you and the children. But five-and-twenty Christmases we have spent here together, and we should be more than human if we had no regrets.'

'You are right, Bessie,' replied the Squire gravely. 'If it were not for the children's sake, I would not leave it now; but you would not let me rob them, or make them pay the penalty of my own folly, Bessie? you would be the last to advise it. Ten years will be nothing to look back upon; and then, God willing, Sunnymeade shall know such a Christmas gathering as it has never known before. Who knows how many sons and daughters, ay, and grandsons and granddaughters, may not be added to our family party before that time comes?'

'Who indeed?' said his wife cheerfully. 'And now let us go down, or the girls will think that I am giving way—as the maids call it. Are my eyes very red?' she added, looking fondly up into her husband's face, with whom since the day when he had first brought her home, the blooming mistress of Sunnymeade, she had never exchanged an angry or reproachful word.

The Squire's reply was sealed with a kiss.

'We are getting childish in our old age,' observed Mrs. Woodbine; and it was indeed true, that the first real care which they had ever known had drawn out, and thrown into strong relief, the deep faithful attachment of years, to which it had given the glow and the freshness and the sunshine of early youth.

The care that had come to Sunnymeade was the care

of undeserved and unexpected poverty. Squire Woodbine, whose generous nature and blameless honour were above suspicion, had backed bills for a friend, to an amount which it would take ten years of the most rigid economy to save out of his yearly income; but he and his wife had determined upon such a line of conduct, in preference to that of touching their capital, or raising mortgages upon the estate, justly considering that the father's individual imprudence should not be allowed to injure the future prospects of their children. It had thus become necessary that they should leave Sunnymeade, and reduce their expenditure; and without a moment's hesitation, Mr. and Mrs. Woodbine had resolved upon a course which involved a bitter self-sacrifice on themselves.

Care had come that Christmas to Sunnymeade, but shame or disgrace would never enter its doors. 'By living upon five hundred a year for ten years,' said the Squire, 'we shall save enough to pay off the debt. Frank shall never have it to say that he came into an encumbered estate, because his father could not face the consequences of his folly like a man.'

One thing, however, was unanimously determined upon, which was that the last Christmas at the home to which they were all so fondly attached should be kept up as royally as in former years. 'We will keep it dark until after the Twelfth-night ball,' said Uncle John, the poor relation, and yet, strange to say, the counsellor and oracle of the family. 'Take my advice, and enjoy yourselves as long as you can, and let the young ones have their Christmas fun.'

It was difficult to associate the idea of fun with the gaunt visage of Uncle John. He was a tall, thin, iron-gray man, a few years older than the Squire, with a thoughtful brow and a keen eye, and looking very unlike the poor dependent upon his relation's bounty, which in truth he was.

Uncle John was an elder brother of Mrs. Woodbine's, who had been sent abroad in his youth, to make his fortune, and who had returned to England a Christmas or two back, a ruined but unbroken man, to find a hospitable welcome to the home of his wealthy brother-in-law, Squire Woodbine of Sunnymeade.

Christmas, therefore, was ever afterwards associated in his mind with what he called the happiest epoch of his life.

He had been before something of a cynic and a misanthrope: human nature had not presented itself to his contemplation in the most favourable light; and he expected, as he expressed himself, to have been kicked out of Sunnymeade, directly it was discovered that he was not a nabob uncle, in the possession of fabulous wealth.

With open heart and hand, however, his good as well as wealthy brother-in-law had received him; and with one accord the whole family had welcomed him to their genial and happy home; so that, with the exception of a few weeks which he spent in London, he lived there all the year round.

The Woodbine family consisted of Frank the eldest, and Benjie the youngest, the two sons of the family, the one four-and-twenty, the other but just eight; of Fanny and Magdalene, the two girls in their blushing teens, and Emily, who was a year older than Benjie, and his chosen and inseparable companion.

When Mr. and Mrs. Woodbine joined the family party, after the conversation recorded above, the domestic circle was complete; and the centre and point of attraction, as was usually the case, was the gaunt awkward form of Uncle John.

Some interesting topic was evidently being warmly discussed, and Fanny's voice was heard indignantly exclaiming, while she held an open letter in her hand, 'I wonder they are not ashamed to offer themselves, after

their behaviour to us in town last year; I declare if I were mamma that I would write and put them off.'

'You may rely upon one thing,' said Frank, laughing, 'that they know nothing of our altered fortunes. I shall be on the list of Aunt Huntington's *detrimentals* now, and even Aggy will decline a flirtation, in direct defiance of "dearest mamma."'

'I can never like them again,' observed Magdalene gravely, 'because of their conduct to mamma; but if they can make up their minds to come, the hospitality of Sunnymeade will be a tacit reproach to them.'

'Regally said, Queen Magdalene,' said Uncle John; 'let no one impeach its hospitality this Christmas, whether friend or foe. Let them come, and you shall have your revenge, is the prediction of the "poor relation."' And he began, as was his wont when anything tickled his fancy, to sing—

'A poor relation came to beg;
In kicking him out I broke my leg,
I broke my leg.
Tooral-ooral-ooral!'

'You don't know what we used to call you, uncle,' said Fanny, the liveliest and prettiest of his nieces; 'we thought you were rich and cross when we were all children, because you used to write mamma long letters full of advice, and never sent her any presents—we used to call you "Uncle Crabtree."'

'And we were so glad when we found that you were poor and not cross,' said Benjie, taking his uncle's large hand caressingly in his own small fist; 'because if you had been rich, you know, you would not have come to live with us.'

Uncle John, as will be perceived from this conversation, was a little fond of parading his poverty. 'No one shall say that I am looked up to for my money,' he used to observe laughingly. 'Even Benjie will get nothing

more than my old Bible when I die, for I have sunk my annuity, and learnt the art of "spending half-a-crown upon sixpence a day," which I believe, after all, to be the true end of life.'

Benjie was the youngest, and the pet of the house; and if Uncle John tenderly loved the rest of the family, Benjie was the apple of his eye. The warm-hearted and affectionate child had wound himself closely round his heart; and no one of the family had yet ventured to tell the little fellow that Uncle John was going away.

'Does Benjie know it?' each one had said to the other; and the reply had invariably been, 'No, he does not know —nobody likes to tell him.'

'When do our trusty and well-beloved cousins make their appearance?' said Frank, rather nervously; for his cousin Claire had been his first and early love; and although her conduct to him in town had dispelled the illusion for the time, now that the old relations and associations were about to be renewed there was a flutter of interest excited in his heart, which he would have been very unwilling to acknowledge.

It will be as well to mention here why the advent of the town cousins, Claire and Agatha Huntington, was not looked forward to with any very lively emotion of pleasure by the Woodbine family. After having partaken of their generous and warm-hearted hospitalities the previous winter at their country home, they had ignored and slighted Mrs. Woodbine and her daughters when they went up to London in the spring; and Claire, the elder daughter, had jilted her cousin Frank (to whom she had, during her stay at Sunnymeade, given the greatest encouragement), for the sake of the attentions of a supercilious young guardsman, who, having amused himself sufficiently at her expense, had in his turn thrown her over, with as much unconcern as that with which he would

have flung away a half-finished cigar, or bestowed a languid kick upon his favourite dog.

'We must not have the tree until Twelfth-night, when your cousins will be here,' said good-natured Mrs. Woodbine, in whose heart no unkind or revengeful feeling ever had a place. 'We are not so poor but that we can afford some remembrance of Sunnymeade to all;' and the tears would have gathered in her eyes again, at the bitter thought of the 'last time,' if the loving eyes of the Squire had not been fixed upon her face, bent upon reading her feelings in every changing expression that flitted across it.

The preparation of the Christmas-tree at Sunnymeade had ever been a costly as well as a graceful one; for it was always hung with presents of either a useful or ornamental nature, as the position of the receiver warranted; and as each member of the household, from the master and mistress to the humblest dependent, both offered and received a gift of some sort, the lighting of the tree in the large hall was a solemnity in which every one concerned in the matter felt a lively and awakening interest.

Christmas-day was spent by the family in comparative privacy, and with mingled feelings of pleasure and pain; but on the following day the expected guests arrived.

Mr. and Mrs. Huntington, and their daughters Claire and Agatha; Sir Harry Douglas, a bachelor neighbour; Captain Alendale, a captain of dragoons, who was laying siege to the heart of Fanny Woodbine; and Lady Jane, and Lady Kitty Elfintower, whose acquaintance with the Woodbines had ripened into friendship since the eventful season in town, formed the party staying in the house; and everybody who knows what country-house visiting is, knows what a fund of social enjoyment and genial companionship such a party, if well selected, is capable of affording.

The Squire and his wife were in their element on such an occasion, while Uncle John, the poor relation, was a universal favourite among young and old. Mrs. Huntington was singular in despising him; but she had an unconquerable antipathy to poverty in the abstract; and the presence of her brother's brother-in-law at Sunnymeade was always hateful in her envious sight.

'I cannot think how they can tolerate him,' she observed to her two daughters, in the after-dinner conclave in her dressing-room, where they were preparing for the Twelfth-night ball; 'he is a perfect bugbear to me.'

'He is the prince of toadies, and that is the reason why they make such a fuss with him,' said Claire spitefully. 'He flatters the girls upon their looks, and the Squire upon his hospitality, and Aunt Woodbine upon her good-nature. All toadies are more or less clairvoyants with regard to people's little weaknesses, which it is part of their game to discover, and then to play upon *ad libitum;* it is the poor relation hanger-on-of-the-family cant, and it sickens me.'

'You would find it sweeter if you had the opportunity of tasting it yourself,' said Agatha, who was fond of teasing her elder sister; 'but it is very evident that the poor relation has no great fancy for any of us. Of course the dear, good, unsophisticated girls told him what a doubtful welcome we gave them to town in the spring.'

'He knows on which side his bread is buttered as well as most people,' was the remark of the *fine-lady* mother, who, like other fine ladies of our acquaintance, could descend to unmitigated vulgarity when her feelings were stirred or agitated more than usual; 'he fawns upon my brother's weak good-nature in a way that to me is perfectly disgusting.'

As the reader will perceive from these remarks, the

skeleton in the cupboard, in the shape of threatening poverty, was not even suspected by any of the assembled guests at Sunnymeade.

Mr. and Mrs. Woodbine had determined that their Christmas festivities should be carried on that year with even greater zest than heretofore. This determination had, indeed, originated with Uncle John, although none of the family would have recognised the fact if it had been directly alluded to: his was the quiet influence that was felt, without being brought prominently into notice, and it was from his lips that the remark had fallen that, as there was nothing disgraceful in the proposed retrenchment, it would be a 'plucky thing' to carry on the Christmas hospitalities for the last time upon their usual scale.

But the secret which had been so well kept up to the last moment—for the night in question was Twelfth-night, at the conclusion of which the worthy Squire had determined upon making known to his assembled guests the altered state of his circumstances—was doomed to be revealed to the Huntington party through the instrumentality of little Benjie, who had followed his cousins to their room, as was his frequent custom, to see them adorn themselves for the ball. He liked to see the ornaments taken from their red-velvet or white-satin nests, and clasped round the throats and arms of the pretty sisters; and when he was allowed, as he sometimes was, to be the principal performer in the operation, it was a proud and happy moment of his life.

He had been gazing with unfeigned admiration at a certain pearl cross, which his cousin Claire had been carefully attaching to some black-velvet ribbon, wherewith to adorn her swan-like throat, when his attention had been suddenly arrested by the heterodox remark quoted above, with regard to his Uncle John.

The colour mounted to his cheeks; his eyes, large,

dark, and gentle by nature, grew larger, and flashed with indignation, while, clenching his fist, he stood forth the champion of the absent and the defamed.

'How dare you say that Uncle John is a toady, cousin?' he said. 'Don't you know that he has been kinder to papa and all of us, since we were ruined, than he was before? I don't quite know what a toady means, but I do know very well that it does not mean any one that would do that.'

'Heydey, child! what say you about being ruined?' exclaimed his Aunt Huntington, her curiosity excited to the utmost. 'I always thought that my brother lived above his income, but I did not think that it had come to this.'

'Oh dear! what have I said? what have I done? I forgot that you were none of you to know it until after supper to-night. You should not have abused Uncle John, and then I should not have let it out.'

'Uncle John will find himself in the wrong box,' said Claire Huntington, with a sneer; 'but what can be the object of keeping up these false appearances if what Benjie says is true?'

'I do not know what you mean, cousin,' replied the child; 'but I do know that you say bad things, and I don't care now about seeing you dressed for the ball.' And without further ceremony he rushed from the room, and seeking his mother in hers, he buried his curly head in her lap, and sobbed so hysterically, that she succeeded with difficulty in soothing him into sufficient composure to tell her what ailed him.

As she stooped to lay her arms fondly round him, and to press him to her warm motherly heart, a parcel which she had been examining, and which had been one of her presents from the Christmas-tree, fell from her lap to the ground; the direction was as follows:

'A remembrance of Twelfth-night at Sunnymeade,

and a New-Year's gift to my dear sister Elizabeth, in token of the affectionate gratitude of her brother John.'

'Don't open it until you dress for the ball,' he had said hurriedly, as he pressed it into her hand, when the parcel was detached from the tree, 'but wear it this evening for my sake.'

Mrs. Woodbine had done as he requested, and had restrained her curiosity until the time arrived for the ball toilette, which had been deferred until the more juvenile festivities were happily over; and she had been on the point of untying the string, and breaking the seals, when Benjie had surprised her by his sudden entrance, and by his burst of unrestrained grief.

As he grew more composed, his mother bethought herself of his love of untying and opening parcels—a sovereign remedy generally for his deepest sorrows—and telling him to pick up the one she had dropped, she gave him a pair of scissors to assist the operation.

With the tears still in his eyes, which now, however, sparkled behind them, Benjie bent over the pleasing task; and as paper after paper was hastily thrown aside, an old-fashioned jewel-case revealed itself to his eager gaze.

'Now what has Uncle John been thinking of in getting me jewelry?' said his sister, with a sigh; 'it is really too bad of him, out of his slender pittance too.' But when the lid of the case flew back under the influence of the pressure of Benjie's diminutive thumb, an expression of astonishment fell simultaneously from mother and son. 'O mamma! how beautiful!' was the exclamation of the latter.

'What can he mean?' exclaimed the mother, whose feminine perceptions recognised at a glance the great value of the glittering gems. 'Why, your uncle must have taken leave of his senses, my dear; these jewels are worth a king's ransom;' and hearing her husband's step in the passage, she called him in to share in her wonder and

admiration at the munificence of the poor relation's gift.

'They are very pretty,' was his remark. 'I suppose Uncle John has had them by him for some time, for the setting is very old-fashioned.'

'Pretty! old-fashioned!' said Mrs. Woodbine, aggrieved. 'Why, they are priceless, and the setting is perfection. What will your sister think if I wear them to-night?' she continued, with a scarcely perceptible smile of triumph, which she would have been more than femininely human not to have experienced. 'Lady Elfintower herself has not finer diamonds than these; why, the price of them would pay our debt, dear,' she added, as her cheeks flushed crimson with excitement at the bare thought. 'Uncle John knows it, and has given them to me in his own delicate way for that purpose. Please God, we shall not have to leave Sunnymeade after all.'

'Sixty thousand pounds for those gimcracks, my dear Bessie! you must be raving,' said the Squire, in alarm, for he thought that his good wife, in the exuberance of her gratitude, had taken leave of her senses.

'Gimcracks as you call them, they are worth more than that,' she said, taking the necklace reverentially from its place, where it lay surrounded by its bright compeers. I will wear them to-night, as he wishes, but afterwards, with John's leave, they must be disposed of to pay the debt.'

'We will talk about that afterwards, my love, for I cannot believe that the jewels are worth the money; it would not have been like Uncle John to pass himself off as a poor relation, whilst holding such a mine of wealth in his hands.'

'What is that you say?' interrupted a well-known voice at the door. 'I came in search of Benjie, and did not, I must own, expect to hear myself abused in full family conclave. A man who has spent half his life in the

East might be supposed to have come by a crystal or so honestly, eh, Bessie? These, to tell you the truth, I intended to keep for Frank's wife, but I had a fancy to see you in them to-night. Let our sun go down in glory, as it will rise again ten years hence.'

With these words Uncle John disappeared, and his sister said, with a sigh, 'That hint about Frank's wife was his way of saying that he did not wish me to part with them. It *would* be a sin too,' she added; and perhaps with pardonable motherly pride her imagination became radiant with a vision of a fair young bride, round whose throat she would clasp the priceless necklace on her wedding-morn, while wondering bridesmaids looked on, dazzled and amazed.

'You must wear your black velvet to-night, with these, mother,' said Benjie, who was well up in the mysteries of the toilette, and who had a natural delight in the contemplation of beautiful and sumptuous things.

'You are right, dear child,' said his mother, kissing him. 'Your sisters must not see me until I am dressed; how surprised they will be when I appear in this blaze of light!'

THE BALL.

The mansion of Sunnymeade was an old-fashioned one, but it was large and very commodious. The saloon was well adapted for a ballroom, and the Christmas festivities generally concluded with a dance, to which all the neighbourhood was invited; and it was for this event that the inmates of the house were preparing, on the evening before mentioned.

It was the Squire's intention when the guests and the family were assembled at supper—when, according to the old-fashioned custom, healths were proposed and speeches made—to make a speech informing his friends and neighbours of his altered circumstances, and to take an affec-

tionate farewell of them before leaving the county for so many years.

The good Squire was fond of making a speech, when he felt himself surrounded by friends and genial well-wishers; and he knew by intuition with what warm and genuine sympathy his announcement and farewell would be received.

It was a sort of innocent sensation scene which he had pictured to himself, and from which his genial ingenuous nature derived some sort of consolation.

Everything was ready, and the musicians were tuning their instruments for the first dance. The young ladies of the family were standing in a group round the fireplace, awaiting the welcome sound of the grind of the first carriage-wheels upon the gravel road.

They formed a very pretty group, the two sisters, and their equally pretty though less unsophisticated cousins; and as they advanced gracefully to receive their guests, even Mrs. Huntington smiled approbation.

'Where is mamma?' whispered Magdalene to her sister anxiously. 'I hope she has not broken down at the last moment.' But as she spoke the words, Mrs. Woodbine entered the room, looking wonderfully handsome.

She was as nervous as a girl about entering the room alone, so conscious was she of the sensation which her brilliant appearance would be sure to create, especially among the feminine part of the community; and meeting with Uncle John in the hall, she linked her arm in his, and thus amply protected, made her public entry into the saloon. 'You *are* beautiful to-night, Bessie,' said the Squire, as he proudly surveyed his wife; and 'Good gracious! what has mamma got on?' was the simultaneous exclamation of her two daughters, as they watched their mother's entrance.

But if their amazement was great, it was as nothing

Drawn by C. W. Cope, R.A.]

CHRISTMAS AT SUNNYMEADE HALL.

compared to that with which their Aunt Huntington and their two cousins gazed upon the regal *parure* in which simple Mrs. Woodbine was decked that night. 'Where can they come from? whose can they be?' they asked of one another, without receiving any satisfactory reply. 'Can Lady Elfintower have possibly lent her her diamonds for the night? What a ridiculous display of borrowed finery if she has! Dressed like a duchess, and hanging on the arm of the arch toady still,' were the remarks which were bandied from one to another; and so engrossed were the whole party in the surmises and suggestions to which Mrs. Woodbine's splendour had given rise, that they did not perceive their cousin Frank, who had joined them, and was waiting for a moment's silence, to enable him to engage his cousin Claire for the first dance. Perceiving, however, that their ill-natured and invidious remarks had for their object his mother and his Uncle John, he was justly angered, and turning quickly upon his heel, with his handsome face in a glow of righteous indignation, he muttered to himself, 'She is not worth it; I will not sacrifice my own pleasure for hers;' and perceiving the youthful and unaffectedly graceful Lady Kitty enter the ballroom at that moment with her sister, it would not have appeared to the closest observer that he made any sacrifice of his own inclination in engaging her hand for the first quadrille.

The Squire was anxious that every one should dance; and while those couples were arranging their places, who had required no coercion or persuasion in the cause, he was enlisting the whole band of wallflowers for a quiet quadrille, providing them with partners with a happy recklessness and dash which none but the Squire himself could have so successfully assumed.

In a few moments every one was standing up, and himself and his wife were the only couple unprovided with a *vis-à-vis*. 'Mamma is in the library,' whispered

Agatha to her uncle; 'you must make her dance to-night.'

'So she shall, by Jove!' was the reply. 'She must dance with Uncle John, he is a defaulter as well;' and signing to the musicians to wait for his return, he sought his sister and his brother-in-law, as a *vis-à-vis* for himself and his partner. 'I will not be contradicted to-night of all nights in the world, Dolly,' he said, to the intense disgust of his fine-lady sister, who had been christened Dorothy after a maiden aunt in the family, from whom expectations had been entertained. 'You must stand up with Uncle John; we are not in Mayfair now, you know,' he added mischievously, 'and at Rome, as the saying is, we must do as the Romans do.'

If a glance could have slain, the career of poor Uncle John would have come at that moment to an untimely end.

Mrs. Huntington, making him a mock curtsy of exaggerated deference, and scarcely deigning to rest the tips of her fingers on his offered arm, suffered herself to be led by him into the circle of dancers, where they took their places opposite to the Squire and the brilliant apparition at his side.

His first remark was one ill calculated to pour oil upon the troubled waters, in the breast of the injured lady. 'How handsome Bessie looks to-night!' he observed; 'she looks as young as Magdalene now.'

As Mrs. Huntington had been jealous of the beauty of her brother's wife from the first day that he paid court to her, a handsome happy girl at a county ball, it was not likely that the amiable feeling would decrease in intensity with advancing years. A sullen 'humph!' was all the reply she deigned to the assertion; but after a moment's pause, unable to conceal the rancour which the sight of the diamonds had called up in her breast, she said, 'What folly all this is, if what rumour says is true!

If my brother is as nearly ruined as people say, all these livery servants may be bailiffs in disguise, for all one knows to the contrary.'

'Your informants, whoever they are'—how little Uncle John suspected his darling Benjie of the delinquency!—'have evidently failed to tell you that dishonour and your brother's name are not likely to be mentioned in the same breath. His ruin, as you are pleased to call it, is the result of an over-generous and trustful nature, and he is prepared to face it like a man.'

'It is true, then,' said Mrs. Huntington, with a gasp of anxiety; and she congratulated herself inwardly on the escape which Claire had had in rejecting the attentions of her eldest cousin the previous season in town.

'I am not at liberty to say how far it is true, and how far it is false,' replied Uncle John coldly; 'but if it is true, my sister and her children will require all the consolation which *real friends* can afford. How far can we rely upon you, Mrs. Huntington, for taking them in for a short time, when they leave Sunnymeade?'

'Indeed,' was the cold reply, 'I fear I can do nothing in the matter; as people make their beds they must lie on them. If my brother has been such a fool as to waste his substance upon idle dependents, it is no business of mine.'

Uncle John's gray eye flashed fire at this remark, but he kept his own counsel, and the quadrille being happily over he showed great alacrity in conducting his partner to her seat.

Magdalene had been dancing with Sir Harry Douglas, and her bright young face was more beautiful than usual, as she turned to make a smiling remark upon the unusual event of Uncle John's dancing.

'I wish every one to be happy to-night,' was his earnest rejoinder: 'every one *shall* be happy to-night, indeed, as far as I am concerned.'

'Why should not I be included in your uncle's sentence?' said Magdalene's partner, as he skilfully tried to evade the vacant seat by Mrs. Woodbine, and to lead off his charge on a vague excursion into byways and anterooms in the nominal pursuit of tea.

'Wait, please, wait till after supper,' said Magdalene nervously, and evidently in allusion to some previous conversation; and withdrawing her hand a little abruptly from his arm she took the nearest place, leaving Sir Harry perhaps more amazed than he had ever been in his life, at hearing himself requested by the most modest and retiring young lady of his acquaintance to defer the momentous question, which would affect the happiness of his future life, until 'after supper.'

Frank, in the mean time, had so far improved his acquaintance with Lady Kitty, that, ardent and susceptible as he was, he would doubtless have proposed to her there and then, if the vision of the after-supper revelation had not restrained him.

Claire Huntington, mortified and annoyed at the little estimation in which she was comparatively held, determined upon a petty revenge, by carrying on a flirtation with Captain Alendale, between whom and Fanny Woodbine she fancied that there existed a growing attachment.

'What a charming family they are!' had been the remark of that young officer, in accents that seemed to come low and muffled through his heavy moustache, while his eyes followed, as he spoke, the graceful motions of the fair Fanny among the revolving crowd before them.

'Charming!' was the insidious reply. 'How sad it is, though, poor things, to think of keeping such a show to the last!'—for Mrs. Huntington had whispered to her daughter that Benjie's testimony had been confirmed by the poor relation, and that the Woodbines were going to leave Sunnymeade for good. 'I suppose you have

heard that they are going to leave this place owing to the embarrassed state of my uncle's affairs?'

'You don't say so!' was the quick reply. 'I imagined that both the Miss Woodbines had large fortunes of their own, and that Frank was heir to ten thousand a year at least.'

'Oh, dear me, no! You have been quite deceived. But I am sorry that I have let out that Fan has not the snug little fortune of twenty thousand pounds, which wicked worldly men like yourself would think a *very great* attraction, in addition to her own *beaux yeux*.'

Whether Fanny Woodbine would have been obliged to her or not, for taking the gallant captain off her hands, I am not now at liberty to say, but certain it was that he did not approach her with his usual eagerness, but stood in the doorway twirling his moustache, with as near an expression of thought upon his countenance as it was capable of wearing. There was a good deal of repetition in the language of his reflections, which can be expressed in a few words, although they wrung the brain of the warrior, with the anguish attending the strain of unwonted and original thought. 'By Jove, though, it was a near thing, a very near thing. By Jove! I have had an escape. A nice girl, too, but no money. By Jove! what a sell!'

So in that little community there were many contending emotions at work, on which the intended disclosure of the night would be brought strongly to bear; and as the time drew near in which it was to be made, the Squire grew nervous and agitated, and his wife felt the beating of an anxious heart, under the weight of the jewels which had been the wonder and admiration of the room.

'They are very fine, I believe,' said the Squire to Lady Kitty Elfintower, as he led her in to supper: 'they were intended for Frank's wife, according to Uncle

John, but he wished Mrs. Woodbine to wear them to-night.'

The colour rose rather warmly to the cheek of his companion as he casually mentioned the words, 'Frank's wife;' and Claire Huntington, who was close behind them with her cavalier, Captain Alendale, gave a start of anything but gratified surprise.

The ball-supper on Twelfth-night at Sunnymeade was always a sort of state affair, at which every guest was seated in comfort; and the engagements, therefore, for the supper-dance were always arranged with due regard to the importance of the occasion. This night, in particular, the members of the family had been anxious to secure a companion of whose friendly sympathy they could feel well assured; and, judging from outward appearances, they were each well supported on the trying occasion. The Squire and his wife sat side by side, according to the custom observed at Sunnymeade from time immemorial; Magdalene had on her right hand Sir Harry Douglas, and on her left her sister Fanny, who had seen with amused surprise the formerly devoted captain pass her by and enlist her cousin Claire with much apparent solicitude for the supper-dance. The rector's son, Ralph Hartopp, whom the more officious attentions of his soldier rival had kept at bay, had anxiously secured her for his partner, and the best news that could have greeted his ears would have been that she was poor and portionless, and that it remained for him to make a name and a fortune worthy of her gracious acceptance. This, you will observe, was selfishness also; but it took a more noble form than that of the man whom he believed to be his rival. Ralph was a talented youth, of a generous and ardent nature; and he had only made the discovery of a deep attachment for the lovely Fanny with the advent of Captain Alendale at Sunnymeade. Benjie and Emily were at Uncle John's left hand, who presided at the other

end of the richly-appointed supper-table, with Mrs. Huntington, his unwilling partner, at his right.

Benjie's eager gaze was fixed upon his uncle's face, as his father began his farewell speech in the simple language of his own good heart. When the Squire rose to return thanks for the generous enthusiasm with which his own and his wife's health had been received, a deep silence prevailed in the room, and the clear accents of his ringing voice, mellowed but not impaired by time, went to the hearts of his hearers in the following words:

'I have to thank you most cordially, my good friends and neighbours, for the warm and affectionate manner with which the last toast has been received. The occasion, I assure you, is one on which any expression of sympathy comes very straight home to all of us. We have need, I do assure you, of all that you have to give us. My very good friends and neighbours: contrary to my usual custom (which is, as you know, to keep the young people away from the ballroom for as short a time as possible), I am going to intrude for a little time upon your patience; but you will excuse me, I know, for I only ask for time to bid you all, in the names of my family and myself, most cordially farewell; and to tell you how it has happened that I find myself an impoverished, if not a ruined man, at the very height of my seeming prosperity. Experience, they say, makes us all wise, but some of us purchase it more dearly than others. I have been fool enough to stand surety for a friend, but I am not knave enough to rob my children of their birthright, or to make them suffer the consequences of their father's folly. They have agreed to help me in the plan to which their dear mother has also nobly agreed: we are going away for ten years—away from Sunnymeade, and from the good friends and neighbours whom we have lived happily amongst for so long. I could not speak of it so calmly, or face it so bravely, if I had not been supported by the

feeling of *right* in the matter. I have been a fool in the eyes of the world, I know, but in the eyes of God, and of those friends who have it in them to rally round a fallen house, I can truly say that I have been nothing more. I have "come to grief," my friends, as the saying is, but I can bear it, and am authorised to say, in all our names, that we can *all* bear it, if you will let us have once again before we go the ringing cheer which has so often reëchoed at this season under the roof of our dear old home; if you will drink, with three times three, the toast of "Our happy return."'

The secret was out, the fact was made known, and many a face had grown pale, and many an eye had drooped, as the voice of the Squire had more than once faltered, and had fairly broken down in his old attempt at fun, when he said, 'I have come to grief.'

But there was one among that assemblage whose eye grew brighter and whose bearing prouder as each word fell from his brother-in-law's lips; and that eye and that bearing belonged to none other than the poor relation, to whom the place of honour had been given at hospitable Sunnymeade. As the echoes of the last cheer died away, and as Mrs. Woodbine and her daughters, Fanny and Magdalene, strove hard to keep down the rebellious choking in their throats, and as Benjie and Emily sobbed aloud, he rose from his chair, and in clear strong accents made the following speech to the assembled guests:

'Ladies and gentlemen: if there is one more worthy of your honour and respect than another in this room, it is the man who sits at the head of this table, whom I am proud to call brother, and who is a thousand times dearer to us all in this, his moment of adversity, than when he sat amongst us prosperous and prospering, the open-handed large-hearted Squire of Sunnymeade Hall. *He has* made his claim upon your patience, to tell you *simply and* shortly of his broken and altered fortunes;

let me bespeak the same patience for a few minutes whilst I tell you a plain unvarnished tale, in which, I think, I can promise that you will all be interested. My good friends: there arrived in England, two years ago this Christmas, a man broken in health, with ruined prospects and soured temper, a very unfavourable specimen of that unfavoured class coming under the head of "poor relations." To make matters worse, he was a cynic at heart, to whom the world, with the careless *bonhomie* which distinguishes it, had administered, in its devil-may-care easy sort of way, more kicks than halfpence. But, strange to say, ladies and gentlemen, this man, with all his faults upon his head, was just the sort of man that Squire Woodbine (with the harmless eccentricity which characterises him) found out that he liked. He has just now told us that he will be considered a fool in the eyes of the world, and we all believed him: he is the sort of man to "come to grief;" he is the sort of man to be considered a fool; he is the sort of man whose princely generosity and noble nature are a riddle to read, to which the world can give but one solution, and that is that "the man is a lunatic." But is it not also true, my friends, that this is the very sort of man whom we can least afford to lose from amongst us? This poor-relation-befriending, simple-minded, noble-natured member of our society must not for very shame be allowed to "come to grief."

'Ladies and gentlemen: I have one more toast to propose; it is an eccentric one, but poor relations and dependents become unlike other people; let us drink to the health of the "poor relation," to the health of the "reformed cynic," of the "ruined stranger," who chose this underhand manner of becoming acquainted with you all, and who is not likely to let Squire Woodbine and his family depart from Sunnymeade when it lies in his power to show *his gratitude more* substantially than in words, and when

he has a balance standing over at his bankers' to the amount of *half a million of money.* It was a field lying fallow, in which the good deeds and the kind words of noble natures have been sown for the last two years. That they may spring up and bear fruit abundantly is the prayer of the "poor relation," in whose behalf I have bespoken your kindness and your forbearance this night.'

WINTERHALTER.]

THE CHRISTMAS ROSE.

[p. 269.

THE CHRISTMAS ROSE.

BY ALEXANDER H. GRANT.

I WILL not sing of the thousands
Of blossoms that hail'd the Spring,
When Flora wedded the meadows
With an opal-jewell'd ring;
When Iris stood in the heavens,
And to laughter turn'd the rain;
When the tamed sea fondled the headlands,
And the rocks smiled back on the main.

I sing not the myriad roses
That tapestried the dawn,
When the blithe flower-sandall'd Summer
Trod the enamell'd lawn;
When the sun was lord of the daytime,
And songs floated out of sight;
When the dew-drops nourish'd the evening,
And Philomel hush'd the night.

I will not sing of the Autumn
That show'd the strength of the root
Pendent from countless branches,
All cluster'd with golden fruit.
I will not sing of the harvest,
Nor the wealth of its bounteous yield;
Nor the rest that garner'd plenty
Left out on the rifled field.

Ah, no! By the yule-log sitting,
Though a moment my glance I cast
Back on the course of the seasons,
And praise all the chequer'd past;
Yet chiefly I thank the Winter,
That in pity gave one reprieve;
That, smiting the first-born of beauty,
Left a rose for this Christmas-eve.

I watch'd through the chills of December
Its delicate petals form,
Till I saw it conquer the night-frost,
And thrive on the daily storm.
And now that my heart is dancing
With the crowning joy of the year,
I witness it gently cherish'd
Fair, on the breast of my fair.

Each leaf had its eloquent language
To say what I pined to say,
And its painted words to utter
The prayer that I dared not pray.
She blush'd—and I bless'd the omen—
As I pluck'd the last pride of the bower;
And I knew that her heart accepted
My own with the Christmas flower.

To her lips she press'd the token,
And its hues began to fail—
So near to the living coral,
What colour but must grow pale?
My heart for a moment flutter'd
Like a fledgling scared in its nest,
Till the flower regain'd its brightness
When laid on the snow of her breast.

Strong from this moment and fearless,
I laugh at the world and its strife;
For to her I am dear as her beauty,
And she is to me as my life.
Henceforth, in the heat of the Summer,
On her love will mine repose;
And through every gloom of the Winter
She will aye be my Christmas Rose.

HOW ONE GHOST WAS LAID.

BY SHIRLEY BROOKS.

I DID not particularly want to be married. I had managed to live, more or less comfortably, for thirty years without ever once being married. I had not given any distinct consideration to the question of marriage, and I have always held the conviction that it is a matter demanding a great deal of consideration. I have read this in books, good and bad (especially the latter), many of which were in the French tongue. At all events, when I went off to Marrowgate for some weeks of my long vacation, I had no more idea that I should return to Tanfield-court, Temple, E.C., an engaged man, than that I should return the owner of Fountains Abbey, of which sacred but ruined edifice I should be exceedingly sorry to deprive a nobleman who keeps a noble place in such noble order, and whose menials bring you such clean knives and plates for your *picnic* with his affable peacocks. I went to Marrowgate *to rest* myself after a good deal of hard work and harder *pleasure, and* not with the slightest intention of changing

the position in life in which it had pleased my guardians to place me, that of the occupant of chambers in the court I have mentioned. But you cannot do just what you like in Yorkshire, or in any other English county with which I am at present acquainted.

I find that though a great number of persons go to Marrowgate, the most part do not volunteer the information that they have been there, and are rather inclined to pass over the narrative of their sojourn on the moor. Or else they praise the place as it deserves to be praised, but take great pains to impress upon you that they went only to please somebody else. The wife's husband wanted bracing up, or the husband's wife was disinclined to the racket of a fashionable watering-place or a German tour; the one sister you speak to went because Julia and Ellen had been advised to take the waters, and the brother was merely in attendance on dear old *mater* and the girls.

But as I have said that I find a great many persons know Marrowgate as well as they know Hastings or Scarborough, I propose to save myself the exceeding trouble of describing the locality. Local description is a drudgery which should be performed for a writer who has something else to write about besides rocks and trees. I believe that I should myself, had I been an author and not a lawyer, have composed some very beautiful novels, but for my fear of the introductory chapters. I never saw the use of them, for my own part. When you want to know what Lord Charles said to Mrs. Asbestos, and what arguments he used to make her run away with him, what do you care whether they stood on a mountain road commanding a view of eleven counties and seventy-four churches, or whether the objectionable nobleman pleaded beside a lake round which flourished the *fauna* of the southern shires? Did he or she notice the churches and the foliage? The good old novelists who had plots and characters, we are told, cut all this sort of thing very short indeed. I also

shall cut it very short. Marrowgate is two hundred miles north of London, and it is a moor, with a few houses on the upper part, and a great many—in fact, a handsome little town—on the lower. Its chief product is the most beautiful air in England, not negatively but absolutely fresh. There are also sulphur and other wells of the utmost virtue and nastiness. People who like coarse reading may look up the account of Marrowgate, which is not spelt so, nor yet the right way, in *Humphrey Clinker*, but I do not advise that study. If you want to go to Marrowgate, you may take a midday train. This gives you time for a comfortable breakfast before you go, but then you arrive too late for dinner—that is, the *table-d'hôte* dinner. You will perhaps notice, towards the end of the journey, that none of the stations have name-boards, and you may think that the inhabitants of the district are ashamed of something, but I believe this is not the case, and that they are not much worse than other persons.

You can choose your hotel in accordance with your idea of comfort. Mine turned out to be very comfortable, for I did not select one of the new houses where folks enjoy themselves in London fashion, with much music and dancing, and sit up late into the night. I went to the oldest and the quietest and the most aristocratic—well, everybody called it so. I do not know how we were more aristocratic than our neighbours, as I never visited the latter. But we were ladies and gentlemen, some of us with inherited titles, and some with titles won with swords, or paint-brushes, or politics, and we made a very pleasant society. The hotel was excellently managed, as is every place, from a country to a shop, that is under feminine direction, and though there were a great many of us, one felt, and it was pleasant to feel, that one was an entity for one's kind-hearted hostesses, and not a mere No. 87, to be debited with brandies and seltzers. We were good, too, for we dined at five o'clock on Sundays, to let the servants

go to worship, as I trust they did, for I heard a high character of the episcopalian and sectarian clerical men in those parts. Also we made many excursions, for there are many delightful places within reach of Marrowgate, one of which is Fountains Abbey, already mentioned. We went in large parties, had carriages and wagonettes, and ample store of refreshment; and such expeditions, the expense being divided, cost each of us very little—in money.

In money, very little, I repeat, *avec intention*, as the French stage direction goes.

I consider, and shall always consider, however much an event, which is likely to take place after Christmas, may seem to contradict me, that the conduct of Miss Isabel Laura Grant, in reference to transactions with me at Marrowgate was—I do not wish to use strong words—indefensible. This term can give no offence, because she contends, and will always contend (if I know her character), that her conduct needed no defence. Bella—it has come to that,—and the name is easy to write—knew that I had no wish to be married, for I myself told her so in Marrowgate Pump-room, within a few days of our meeting. Moreover, if she had made up her mind, as proved to be the case, that the non-existence of this wish should be utterly forgotten, she ought to have satisfied herself, by some kind of inquiry, that no person had a claim upon my affections. But about this she took no sort of trouble in the world. Then, when she had one way or another brought matters to a crisis, at which it became necessary for me to speak plainly, and proceed from a hypothetical cottage of love to a statement of income, a young lady of an exalted nature would have pointed out that I ought to consider well what I was doing, that there were other young ladies, even at the hotel, with personal and pecuniary advantages equal to her own (and she *knew* at least three of them to be disengaged—I say she knew that), and would, had she acted like a true friend, as a girl who aspires to the sacred

duties of wifehood ought to be able to act, have done anything but precipitate a result of which neither of us had dreamed that day month. There was no such consideration shown; and so resolved was this young lady to give me no chance of re-weighing consequences, that as we walked over the fields, from the Montpelier Spring (her sisters Maria and Louisa preferred riding back with the rest of the wagonette party to breakfast, and I believe had been incited so to do by Bella), she actually told me that I had made her *so* happy. I will do her the justice to say that she had the grace to blush in making this statement —at least I think so—but the road goes through a long railway tunnel, which is rather dark. Anyhow, she fidgeted a good deal to get her veil right as we emerged. Well, the thing was done, and though I was not prepared to express regret that it was so, I repeat that I was not allowed fair play.

That expedition to Fountains Abbey had clenched the nail that was to unite Bella Grant's fate with mine. The box-seat of the wagonette held three, and somehow Miss Grant managed to be between me and the driver, who was deaf, or as I suspect was deaf when he chose to be, for I did not find him at all hard of hearing, one morning before the St. Leger, when I read him a little bit of advice sent to me by a sporting friend. Yet perhaps the word 'race' works a miracle on Yorkshire ears, and I may wrong him. At all events he gave no sign of heeding anything that passed between Miss Bella and myself, and had to be poked at and shouted at when we wished to know anything about the places on the road. Bella said that he was deaf, but this evidence, under the circumstances, does not seem to me altogether decisive. She behaved very artfully when we got to the park in which the abbey is, and during our picnic sat by somebody else, and scarcely spoke to me, although I took the greatest pains to see that she was helped to chicken-wing and had ice in her champagne.

But I think it was borne in upon her, as the Quakers say, that I might be going to walk to the ruins with a very pretty girl who had been telling me all that was known about the abbey, and a great deal more; for Miss Bella contrived to be standing very near me when the order to march was given, and to admire my cigar-case so pertinaciously, that we were well on the way together before she had nearly finished questioning me as to how I came by it. Looked at from her own point of view, her behaviour in this matter was ladylike, and from mine it was womanlike, by which I mean artful. She had avoided a continued flirtation, but she had not lost her fish. After this, she had everything her own way, and Nature conspired with her, for the day was lovely, and so hot that it was necessary to walk slowly, and to rest in shady places. Finally, in the cool cloisters of the Catholic abbey that was said which will have to be re-affirmed, with appropriate theological expressions, before the altar of a Protestant place of worship.

I admit and avow that I felt no particular grievance in the arrangement we had made. Bella's family was good, she had very few brothers and sisters, and her father had a good deal of money. Also she was very charming, and I had every reason to believe that her affection for me, if of rapid growth, was healthy, and not like some loves that outgrow their strength and go into consumptions. I could afford to marry a sensible girl with a soul above *Le Follet*. But I could not help feeling that I had been rather surprised into the match, and that it was due to myself not to display any exuberant satisfaction with my lot. If I ever went beyond this negation of exaltation, and seemed indifferent or inattentive—as Bella more than once asserted was the case, making absurd poutings with her lips, and letting ridiculous films come over her eyes—it was accidental, and showed my sincerity of disposition. Really, I was growing very fond indeed of Bella; but one does

not parade one's feelings before the nobility, gentry, and clergy of a county, in hotel assembled. I believe that we conversed together a good deal more than would have been possible anywhere but at an hotel, and I could not have been a very secret lover, for three or four ladies praised Bella Grant to me, in a way which would have had no meaning if they had not perceived my regard for the young lady. In fact, they would have been officious and impertinent. Still, I was conscious that Miss Bella often looked wistful, and as if she were not entirely satisfied that I was entirely satisfied. This thought ought to have dictated a different line from that which it pleased her to adopt. It should have been her business to convince me of her extreme eligibility.

However, one day I gave her an opportunity not only of assuring herself of my devotion, but of letting other people know it, which I suppose is the chief thing with a woman. We had a dance at our hotel. Not, of course, a fast affair, to which Thomas, Richard, and Henry might come. It is still told as one of the terrible traditions of Marrowgate, that to some hotel ball (not at our place) there came two shopmen in human form—yes, shopmen from * * * * *, and somehow contrived to dance with the daughter of a county member and with the great-niece of a dowager marchioness. The tale is told in a low voice, and with befitting horror, but it is *true*. Such a thing could not have occurred at our house, where we all knew one another, and where any visitor must be vouched for. Our ball was everything that was social and decorous. It occurred to me that Bella should have a bouquet. Now there are no flowers in Marrowgate, except flowers of sulphur, and I telegraphed to my old friend Mrs. Buck, of Covent Garden, to forward me a very handsome bouquet. It duly arrived, and I sent the box to Bella's mamma's apartment. When it was about time for me to dress, I was making my way along a passage

leading to my room, when Bella, who had been on the watch for me, glided from another passage, and was by my side, with the flowers in her hand.

'They are simply lovely, Charles dear,' she said; 'but you—you mustn't be offended.'

'Because they are lovely?' I asked.

'No; but because I cannot take them into the room. Not one girl in twenty will have any flowers, and not one will have anything so splendid as this. It would be so remarked, dear.'

'I am very sorry, Bella. I thought to have pleased you.'

'So you have, very much. I am very, very much pleased indeed, and I will keep the flowers as long as they live, perhaps as long as I live—there. But you will not mind my not taking them into the room to-night. If you had thought of giving the same to Maria and Louisa, it would not have—come, you are not to look displeased. I must go, and I am engaged to you for the first waltz.'

She touched my hand as she went away, and of course the touch meant that if we had not been on the landing of an hotel, and so forth. But I do not think that wherever we had been, in my then temper, and so forth.

I did not go and dress. I went down-stairs, and penetrated into a very sacred little room behind the bar, a private nook belonging to the ladies who managed the house. No one came beyond a compartment outside this, without special leave. But I had been favoured with the privilege of general admission. Nobody was there, and I sat down upon a snug little sofa, opposite the fireplace, and—I suppose that I may as well write—sulked, although sulkiness is by no means my habit. I was exceedingly vexed. Why could not Bella show the bouquet which I had gone, or at least sent, two hundred miles to fetch—four hundred, if you count both ways? Not to be made the subject of remark! Most girls are glad enough to be

remarked upon as engaged. She had made no secret of the affair, and had often sat by me on the benches in the garden for a long time together. There was some other reason. Yes, that must be so. There had been some new arrivals—men—I saw them at the *table d'hôte*. Louisa had mentioned that some acquaintances had been expected. Possibly one of them had come because Bella was here.

I need not trouble you with the wild-goose chase for which I had now mounted. I daresay that most young persons have performed that sporting feat in their time, or will do so. The former don't want to be reminded of their folly, and the latter will not take warning. Only I know that I managed to make myself particularly detestable to myself during the three-quarters of an hour which I spent in that snug solitude. Snug! I used to think it so, but now I hated it. I have an odd sort of memory, and, when I am out of temper, external objects fix themselves, but in a most disagreeable way, in my mind. I perfectly well recollect everything in that oblong slip of a room, on one of the longer sides of which I was. I remember that opposite, to my left, was an old engraving of a Dutch baker, and then a photograph of a horse and chaise, and then a looking-glass, and then another photograph (of a lady), and then a clock, under which was a small curtain, concealing shelves, and then an old-fashioned mirror with balls round it; and then, passing a big window, there was on the right-hand wall a coloured print of a view in Ireland, and then a portrait of some marvellous cow that had taken prizes, and then a print portrait of a provincial notoriety. All these things I stared at in turn, counting them backwards and forwards, and hating them all. Then I went up to dress, yet not without more than half a mind to go to bed instead. At this distance of time I cannot help fancying that my dinner had been indigestible, or that some fluid had not done its influence kindly—yet our dinners and liquids were admirable; I will say that for Yorkshire.

However, as I found myself beginning to hate everything in my bedroom with the same liberal spirit I had shown down-stairs, I went rather savagely at my toilette, and I was soon ready. Then the ill-condition (I call it so, as I am writing for young persons at a serious season, but my feelings were quite natural, and therefore justifiable) came upon me again, and I would not go down-stairs. I sat down and read the oldest book I had got, *Public Characters for* 1778, which I had fetched from the library in despair, one wet day. I read of people who were somebodies in that year, and are nobodies now, and I pretended to myself to be interested in the way in which Captain Sabine had cut out some Malay pirates nearly a hundred years ago. I made notes of that exploit. All this while I knew, or at least hoped, that Bella was incessantly looking at the ballroom door, as the lady with the sweetest eyes that were ever seen looked for Camoens. I believe I felt angry with myself, as well as with all other organic and inorganic matter, but relented into a certain satisfaction that the candle had burned down into the socket. Bella might be false, I might be jealous, but it was too ludicrous to sit in one's bedroom in the dark. I had heard the music a very long time. As for that first waltz, it had been over more than an hour.

Bella saw me as soon as I came in, and I think that she gave one earnest glance to assure herself that I had not been ill (she makes this statement), and then she hardly looked at me at all. There were about a hundred people in the great room, but it was not crowded. The musicians were playing away furiously, for they were in a gallery to which there is no access except by a ladder, which is taken away when they have mounted, and they cannot get out for refreshment. I made the circle of the room, and I suddenly noticed that Bella, Maria, and Louisa had all got bouquets. They were little ones, but very prettily arranged. Three bouquets. Brought, of course, by one of the men—

the friends—the new arrivals. Perhaps by that tall, coarse, mercantile-looking person, with large studs (handsome ones, though—of course this sort of man can get what money can buy), who was floundering through the Lancers with Miss Grant. It gave me a pleasure to call her Miss Grant, to think of her as Miss Grant. But my soul speedily exalted itself against such a humiliation as I had received. I felt that more than sulking was required of me now. It was necessary that I should be dignified. Therefore, walking past Miss Grant, and so near that she had ample opportunity for observing the haughty play of my countenance (I did not much care about catching her eye, somehow), I left the room. I retired to our smoking chamber, then entirely deserted, and having duly hated all the pictures, and an old pianoforte (made for the late Prince of Wales), I smoked a great many cigars very fast, and went to bed. My dignity was in some sort appeased, but the sound of the music, which ascended for a very long time, did not exactly soothe my feelings. As I fell asleep, I fancied that the fiddles were laughing at me.

I was dressing before I was called in the morning, and as my answer to the knock that announced hot water did not prevent another knock, I went impatiently to the door, and the excellent and venerable chambermaid presented me with a note. It was clear that she knew and approved my engagement, for she was no indiscriminate carrier of *billets*, as certain indiscreet flirters had known, to their humiliation and dismay. The note was very short.

'You must be unwell, very unwell. *Do* let them send over to the doctor.—B.'

'That is a nice, prosaic, businesslike way of writing,' said I to myself, in a great rage. 'If she had written, "I am in agonies until I can explain, implore," and so on! Send for the doctor! Send for the—'

But it may be thought by those who attribute bad

passions to bad influences, that there was at least no occasion to do what I was going to advise, and that I was being looked after very carefully in the quarter in question.

When I got down to breakfast, neither Miss Bella Grant nor one of her party was there. This I was rather glad of. I made short work of my coffee, poached eggs, ham, marmalade, toast, and the rest, and hastened into the garden to read the telegrams in the *Leeds Mercury*. These, which come to us at Marrowgate the first thing in the morning, are all the news one cares for there. I suppose the air is too bracing to leave us in the state of mental health in which one cares for mere politics, murders, and theatrical matters. I took up a position well in front of the hotel, where I (and anybody who might join me) could be seen from the windows of the public and the private rooms. I could not quite explain to myself the reason for this precautionary measure; perhaps it was instinctive.

'Not much more in your telegrams than in mine, I suppose,' said my especial friend, Colonel Cleveland, who had subjugated Indian provinces, and looked as if he could do it again, and without talking much about it. Indeed, I am ashamed to say that I never knew of his great exploits until I read about them in history. He did not speak of them, but spoke a great deal about moths, which he was always collecting, and pinning to corks in a sort of sandwich-box. He said that they did not feel. I am sure he thought they did not, or he would never have impaled them. I should think that they preferred being left to cling to walls, without the aid of pins—but I know nothing about it.

'There is nothing, Colonel. Will you change your Tory *Gazette* for my Liberal *Mercury*?'

'You shall have the *Gazette*, and I hope it will do you some good in your principles, but I won't have the other. By the way, I did not see you dancing last night.'

'I did not dance. In fact, I had a headache.'

'Those waters are too strong, that's it. They are strong. There's an old rhyme down here about somebody smelling them as he was taking a constitutional flight one morning, and feeling sure that he was not far from home. Was it the monks that taught the people to be always making sport of the enemy? That does not seem to have been a good trade policy, eh?'

But I was not at all inclined, just then, to discuss the education question of the Middle Ages. Another morning I could have given Colonel Cleveland fifty stories on the subject. To-day I could not remember one.

'I won't bore you,' said the Colonel. 'I see your headache's not gone. But we'll have a drive, you and I only, in the afternoon, if you like. I have heard that there is some of my hunting to be done at Brimham Rocks. You won't mind reading while I make my bag?'

'If I do not go to London, I will go with you with pleasure.'

'London be hanged! It's the best place in the world, but one gets tired of the best places and the best people too. By the way,' said the veteran, in the kindest tone, 'it's an awful liberty, but we've been rather intimate, and I'm old enough to be your father. Don't *you* be in a hurry to be tired of any good person. Forgive that, and I'll never say another word about it. I really beg your pardon.'

'That you sha'n't; and I am deeply obliged, but—'

But the kind old soldier was marching off, bawling out something about taking care of a headache.

'Then the affair has got wind already,' said I. 'And of course he takes the wrong side. Takes the woman's side. Those fatherly old soldiers always do, and they ought to know better.'

I went at my paper again, and the mental operation of the preceding night was renewed. I began to hate the paragraphs, and the people mentioned in them, and myself for returning again and again to the same old news.

Then I lit a cigar, and had scarcely got it into work when Mrs. Denison came up, with her two pretty daughters, all great allies of mine in what I begin to look back upon as my happier days. They fairly surrounded me.

'No, you need not put your cigar out, Mr. Cornbury,' said Mrs. Denison. 'I am not going to stand here longer than enough to tell you that I have a great mind never to speak to you again.'

'I never will,' said Grace Denison.

'And I never will,' said her sister Emily.

And yet, in spite of these fearful menaces, which were delivered with a good feminine emphasis, it did not seem to me that the speakers were very angry with me. Indeed, as I now see matters, what right had they to be angry with me? But that did not occur to me then. I seemed to have given people a title to lecture me. To be sure, they did not know my deep wrongs.

'I am very sorry,' I said.

'Oh, very like being sorry,' said Emily Denison, who was the more impulsive of the twain. 'It looks like sorrow to be sitting smoking in the sun, reading a Radical newspaper.'

'A most excellent journal, Miss Emily Denison; and it is not my fault that the sun shines, I suppose. You made some remarks upon him for not shining the day before yesterday when you wanted to go to Bolton Abbey, and tire yourself out before the next night's ball.'

'I wonder you dare to use the word ball,' said Grace.

'Dance, then,' I said humbly.

'I hate misplaced levity,' said Grace sententiously. 'Things are not to be done in that way, and then joked out of.' The sentence was neither elegant nor explanatory, and yet I believe that we all understood it.

'I am in disgrace, somehow, it appears,' I said.

'Yes, I should think that you were,' said Mrs. Denison; 'but as I always try to take an indulgent look at things,

I hope something will be said or done to make amends. Now, girls, if you are coming to Bilton, come directly.'

They went away; but I am quite sure that if Bella could have seen the looks the girls gave me (especially Emily) Miss Grant would have been altogether satisfied with her champions. I do not think that I am vain, or apt to set too high an estimate on myself, but my glass shows that I am reasonably good-looking, and my income shows that I am reasonably clever. It may be that the Misses Denison recognised these facts, and thought (especially Emily) that a gentleman might make a mistake, and yet not be altogether shut out from feminine compassion and comfort.

'Bella does not appear, and everybody else does,' I said. 'I will walk off to Knaresborough, I think, and—'

'And mingle your tears with the Dropping Well. I would, old fellow, if I were you,' said a voice behind me. 'Don't look cross,' the speaker continued; 'if a man talks out loud, it is politeness in the second person to suppose himself addressed.'

'Don't bother me, Tom Foster, this morning.'

'Who wants to bother you?' said my old college friend. 'I meant to do you a good turn, and give you the consolations of religion—well, not that exactly; but you ought to remember what is said, *Varium et mutabile semper*—don't you know? I believe it is one of Solomon's Proverbs, and very right too.'

'It is very right, Tom; and now go and play croquet with Miss Martin and her cousin. They are asking for you as plain as eyes can speak.'

'Ah, eyes! Yes, eyes! And if those articles could have spoken last night—but that's nothing. Oh, eyes!'

Repeating which noun, with varied exclamations annexed, Tom Foster went off, picked up a mallet, and saluted therewith.

'I will certainly go to Knaresborough,' I said, but not

aloud this time. And I was gathering myself up for departure, when a young lady tripped out at one of the ground-floor windows, and down the three steps which led from them to the garden. It was Louisa Grant.

'Can I say a word to you, Mr. Cornbury, unless you are too much occupied?' said Louisa. Yesterday it was 'Charles;' and she would have interrupted me in a conversation with the Lord Chancellor.

'I can never be too much occupied to speak to you, Louisa, as you might, I think, be partly aware,' I said gravely.

'Oh, I don't know. Things change so that it would not have surprised me to be told to go about my business.'

'I had hoped that Miss Louisa Grant thought me a gentleman.'

'What she thinks is of very little consequence. A gentleman, more especially under certain circumstances, might have thought it becoming to make some kind of explanation—to explain in some kind of way—'

Louisa's vocabulary was limited, and it did not supply her with a third way of putting it; but she looked exceedingly angry, and—I may wrong her, but I believe that she was uncommonly near enforcing her argument with a stamp. No prettier foot could have been stamped in Yorkshire.

'Or to ask for some kind of explanation,' I added; 'but not having lately been fortunate in obtaining his wishes, he has held his tongue.'

'If you think that we are going to put up with that sort of thing—' began the impetuous and colloquial Louisa. 'There, I hate you! You have made me talk like a milliner; but the words would come, and I was speaking for somebody else, not myself—somebody whom I love a hundred times better than myself, and who deserves that I should.'

And there were honest tears in Louisa's honest eyes.

I am not a victim to all descriptions of 'weeps;' but when they are genuine—why, I don't like it.

'What do you wish us to do?' was Louisa's next question; and it was said almost humbly.

'I do not feel that I have any right to express any wish.'

'You are not speaking like yourself. You are too good to say such things from your heart.'

'I am glad of your good opinion. I am glad to have somebody's.'

'If you have not everybody's, all the same as yesterday, whose doing is it but your own? And yet you will not deign to say a single word of apology, or pave the way for what everybody wants.'

'Everybody wants?'

'Well, except you, perhaps. Why don't you see Bella? I don't say that she can see you, because, if anybody ever cried her eyes out, that is what Bella has been doing since twelve o'clock last night, when she rushed to her room.'

'She stayed, however, till the last moment that dancing was allowed,' I said, with a guess.

'Certainly, and danced the last dance; and you would have been the first to remark upon a girl who exposed her feelings to a ballroom full of people. Is not that true? and is not that reasonable?'

'Very, if I could only be made to understand why there should have been any feelings to conceal.'

'You talk like an idiot. There, I am vulgar again; but you drive me wild with such a speech. What feelings? You walked into the room, showed yourself, took care Bella should see you, and then disappeared. I won't talk of insult—somehow I can't think you the man to insult a girl—but was ever anything so cruel done since the very beginning of the world?'

I was getting excited, too; but I could not resist

noticing the remote yet exact date to which Louisa had thrown back her examination. I said:

'It appears to me that your sister does not take you into her confidence.'

'My sister! How dare you speak of her in that way? Which sister? what sister? You mean Bella Laura—say so.'

'Of course.'

'Does not take me into her confidences! I daresay that she may have confided many things to you that she has never been prompted to tell me; but we are one in heart and soul, and wrong to one is wrong to both.'

'I could wrong neither; that you ought to know.'

'But I don't. Why did you leave the room and not return?'

'Have you asked her why I did so?'

'She can only guess at something; but it is so miserably absurd and foolish an idea, that I wonder she can hold it for a moment. Do you mean that because you gave her a bouquet, and she thought it better, as she explained to you—and she was quite right, and I should have done the same thing if I had been in the same case—what am I saying?—yes; do you mean that, because she did not carry your bouquet into the room, you were justified in your shameful conduct?'

'No, Louisa. I have considered her refusal; and if we never exchange another word, I shall always say that she spoke like a high-minded and delicate-minded girl. Even had she put the matter to me less gently, I should equally have recognised her good sense, to say nothing of a lady's right to wear what she pleases. It was her subsequent conduct that justified mine.'

'What in the world did the poor girl do, then? I was in the room all the time. She danced a few dances, for the look of the thing, but a nice time her partners must have had with her; and when she had given up all hope

of your return, she just held on till she could make her escape. There was supper; but she was crying on her bed, not supping.'

'A sad disappointment to the amiable gentleman who gave her the bouquet she wore instead of mine! I saw he had extended his courtesy to all of you. So my present was left on the dressing-table, while his was carried about by Bella. She knows best what hopes she gave him to carry about in return.'

The simile of the cloud suddenly shifting from across a landscape, leaving it in sunshine, is so old, that to use it amounts to genius; and none other occurs to me. That was what occurred in Louisa's face; and in defiance of all Marrowgate proprieties (which are very proper) and all others, she set up a laugh that might almost have been heard at the Pump-room, and that is, bee-flight, three-quarters of a mile from where we stood.

Some persons have thought, or at least said, that I have some affinity to the unpleasant character called a prig. I do not, of course, mean the word in the slang sense which implies dishonesty. Mr. Frank Cowley told me, in my own chambers, that I should make a very good fellow one of these days, when I had been married, and learned larger views, but that at the time he spoke my autobiography would be an excellent study of priggishness. I am unaware that the sarcasm was merited, and I do not find its justification in any definition supplied by the dictionaries. His remark was elicited by some objections which I made to the modern costume in theatrical spectacle; and upon that topic one of her Majesty's chief officials was of the same opinion as myself. A prig is defined as 'a pert, conceited, saucy, pragmatical fellow,' and this description does not apply to me. But I confess that I like persons to conduct themselves with propriety; and I did not consider that Miss Louisa Grant was so conducting herself in breaking out into the unlady-like shout of

laughter. It attracted the notice of several residents in the hotel, and I naturally disliked such notice to be drawn upon one whom I had regarded as a probable connection of my own.

'I am gratified to afford you amusement, Miss Louisa,' I said gravely, 'even though I am unable to understand its origin.'

'You are an old dear,' she replied, with increased levity; 'and now that *I* understand, do you know that I like you a great deal better than I ever thought I should? You *can* feel, can you? I am so glad.'

Thereupon the second Miss Grant made me a little curtsy, her eyes laughing in spite of her attempt to be serious, and she went into the house. I cannot say that I felt my dignity unimpaired by our interview, and in other circumstances I should have been more angry; but Bella's behaviour had truly grieved me, and I confess that I was thinking more of her than of myself.

'All squared, all right, old boy,' said Tom Foster, very needlessly leaving the croquet-ground to come to say this, and then walking back again, without waiting for any reply. He was right, too; for I hate to be called 'old boy,' and he knew this.

I left the garden, and walked across the moor in the direction of a small pavilion, in which is one of the many waters of Marrowgate. At that time of the day this spring is unfrequented, and I was in a mood to wish to be alone. When I reached the little temple, I found that even the attentive young person who filled the glasses with a fluid strongly suggestive of weak ink had left her post, and I took a chair, and proceeded to review the situation of affairs.

But the odds against me were very unfair. If sisters work together, they can do almost anything they like. The Misses Grant were very faithful allies. I was alone on that moor.

In a few minutes I saw a face at one of the windows, and the next minute the owner of the face stood at the door. It was Bella's other sister, Maria, who was a much quieter sort of girl than Louisa; and at Maria I had looked with some favour on my arrival, and before Bella had settled it with the others that she would honour me with her preference.

'Oh, the girl is not here,' said Miss Maria calmly. 'Then, perhaps, you would fill my tumbler for me; if you do not mind the trouble.'

I made a proper answer, for I hope I never forget how a gentleman should behave; I raised the cover of the well, and obtained the water for the third Miss Grant. I presented the glass, without speaking. As I did so, I observed that she had in her hand one of the bouquets presented to the sisters over night by the coarse-looking mercantile person with the studs. Maria saw me notice this, smiled in a more saucy manner than was usual with her, and then began the elaborate process of holding the breath so as to avoid tasting the detestable water.

'No,' she said, after an effort, 'I can't take it to-day, and I won't. Unless I am going to offend you by not taking what you got for me?'

'I can have no right to be offended at anything *you* may do, Miss Maria.'

'Oh, I didn't know,' said Maria. 'Some people take offence when none has been given.'

'That is a bad habit, Miss Maria, and it implies an objectionable nature.'

'So it does, Mr. Sententious,' replied Miss Maria Grant.

Now I hate nick-names, especially from female lips, and I did not answer. Then did Miss Maria, to my exceeding astonishment, poke her bouquet into my face, right under my very nose.

'Isn't it nice?' she asked, in a taunting sort of way. 'Isn't it lovely? Isn't it Atkinson, and Piesse and Lubin,

and Rimmel and all together? And he looks as if he didn't like it! What a wretch!'

And this was the quiet and serious Miss Grant, to whom I might possibly have thought of paying attention. It has been truly remarked, though I cannot at the moment give a reference to the authority, that the wisest man does not understand the least wise woman.

'Now he *is* offended,' said Maria. 'But it is of no use his holding his tongue. We will have it all talked out, and then he may go to London, or wherever he pleases. Come in, Louisa and Bella!' she cried.

Will it be believed that both these young persons just then passed the window, and came in at their sister's invitation? There we were, all four in the temple. Three priestesses and one victim. It was quite classical.

But there is more to be believed. Both Bella and Louisa had got their bouquets, and bore them in their hands without the least attempt at concealment. In fact, Louisa rather flourished hers, but I have said that she was a demonstrative girl.

Bella quietly walked to the chair which I had left and sat down, and the sisters stood on each side of her, like supporters in a coat of arms. But it was quite plain that Louisa had told the truth on one point, and that Bella had been crying; and, as I have already remarked, I have a great objection to real tears.

'Won't you shake hands with me?' said Miss Grant, in rather a low voice, and looking up at me in a way that was almost piteous. It is not fair for a girl to look in that way, but I had been a sufferer from unfairness all through. I know that I ought to have been cold and distant. I might have fought against the words, but the look was too much for me. I hastened to take her hand, when that Louisa threw mine up in the air.

'Indeed, no, and that is not the way to treat him, Bella; and I won't have it, and there's an end.'

'Really—' I said.

'Really, indeed! There's nothing real about you, so don't use a word that you've nothing to do with. What did we agree, Bella? Now don't fly away from your bargain, for that sha'n't be.'

Here Bella burst into tears, and looked at me very much as if she wished—well, wished her sisters were out of the way. I think that she was going to get up, and come to me, but Maria laid her hand on Bella's arm.

'Certainly you are to do as you promised, Bella,' said Maria.

'Then—then give me my bit of st-st-string!' sobbed Bella, quite piteously this time.

This was a most extraordinary request, I thought, all things considered. Her bit of string! What on earth did she want a bit of string for? Was she going to ask me to play at cat's cradle?

'There it is, Bella dear,' said Maria, producing a piece. It was gardener's string, I noticed, and this bewildered me more.

'The flowers,' she said, in the same unhappy way.

Maria and Louisa each handed her a bouquet, she put them to her own, and then with trembling fingers tied the three together. I thought she would never have managed the knot; but when the others tried to help her, she pushed their hands away rather hastily.

'There!' she said, holding out to me the united bouquets.

'What for, Bella?' was all I could say in my puzzlement.

'That's as you—you gave it me—only not so nicely done up; and now take it back again, and never—never—give me anything any m-more!'

'For she won't have it,' Louisa came in, like a clerk following up a clergyman.

It then occurred to me that I might, by possibility,

have made a mistake, though I am not in the habit of doing so.

'As I gave it to you, Bella?'

'Yes, of course,' said Maria. 'Only it is not his fault, exactly, that he does not recognise his own flowers; because, you know, he never saw them, as he sent the box at once to our room.'

'I—I—saw you were vexed,' said Bella, 'on the landing, and I determined that your flowers should come into the room; so I divided the bouquet into three, one for each of us, and I thought you would guess; but if I had believed that you would have been so—cruel—'

I am not demonstrative, like Louisa, but—perhaps it was being in a temple—anyhow, I was kneeling by Bella, and she was crying over me, and I think that Louisa gave me a sort of parting slap, and hurried away with Maria, and I know I have said that our marriage is arranged.

MY CHRISTMAS PIECE.

WHEN you go to see my Christmas burlesque at the Theatre Royal ——, you will laugh consumedly — at least I hope you will— and when you are coming down the stair after it is over, I shall doubtless hear you remark to a friend—as I have heard you remark to a friend on previous occasions—'An amusing trifle, passes away an hour pleasantly; but really great nonsense when you think of it.'

A trifle, is it? Great nonsense when you think of it? Well, perhaps you will oblige me by *thinking* of it. Do you know, sir, that that trifling Christmas burlesque has been sitting upon my shoulders like an old man of the sea ever since midsummer; that it has monopolised my whole energies for more than a month; that it has put my brain to the torture of the rack; that it has cost me long days of toil, and longer nights of sleepless thought; that it has worried my very heart out of me, made me sour, cross, and misanthropical, and driven me to do what my

soul abhors—to use bad words? Perhaps you think I use bad words enough in the burlesque. They are nothing to the words that have escaped me when a pun has obstinately declined to fit into the tensyllabic line, or when I have had to alter a whole scene to suit the fancy of the leading lady or the leading gentleman. I should like to show you the manuscript with all those bad words duly set down in the places where they naturally arose. I don't think the Chamberlain would have licensed that original copy.

Bless you, sir, you have no idea what hard work it is writing a burlesque, trifle as it is when all is done. Perhaps you think I have only to please myself and the manager. There you make a very great mistake. I have to please a score of people, myself very often least of all. First and foremost, I have to suit the manager with a subject. In June last, when I went to breakfast with him and talk over the matter, I suggested a story on which I had set my heart. I saw my way to it clearly; I had mapped out all the scenes, I had fitted all the members of the company to a hair. Above all, certain incidents and topics belonging to it promised a mine of new puns. That, let me tell you, was an important desideratum; for nowadays the pun-mines are nearly all worked out. But do you think the manager would have that subject? No. He had a subject of his own—one of those which look promising at the first glance, but which, when you come to work them out, prove exceedingly difficult, if not wholly impracticable. But even then I am not left to myself. I know what I shall have to face when the piece comes to be read and cast. I know that Miss B. will throw up her part if it be not, as to lines, points, and puns, exactly as good a one as Miss A.'s. Both those ladies love to appear in male attire, and look saucy in the sauciest dress of the sauciest period of history. Supposing I am compelled to condemn one of them to the petticoats properly appertain-

ing to her sex: she will be my enemy from that moment. She will hate me, and she will hate her more fortunate sister who gets the blue-satin trunks and the striped stockings. What makes this dread certainty more unpleasant to contemplate is the circumstance that, while the piece is being written, I am in great favour with both these ladies. Whenever I meet them, they shake hands with me with impressive warmth, and smile upon me in the most seductive manner with those glittering black eyes of theirs, until I am almost inclined to fancy they are both over head and ears in love with me. As they come tripping up to me, first one and then the other, laying their pretty, white, sparkling fingers upon my arm, looking up with arched eyebrows into my face, and whispering in coaxing tones a hope that I will write them good parts, I feel how happy I should be if I could only give blue-satin trunks and striped stockings to both. I overhear Miss B. say to the second walking lady that I am 'quite handsome.' But there is only one Prince Prettypet in the piece, and Miss A. is sure to have the part, and after the reading I shall be scowled upon by Miss B., who will retire into a corner and inform the second low comedian—not in a whisper—that I am an ugly brute. Don't imagine that I shall be fully consoled by the favour of Miss A. Your leading lady, or gentleman, is as insatiate as a boa constrictor. Miss A. has carried off the blue trunks, the striped stockings, and a part of forty lengths; but the songs have yet to be allotted. Will she be allowed to exhibit her powers in a vocal rendering of the 'Carnival of Venice,' which she has been practising for the last three months under the directions of her music-master? The situation is admirably adapted for the introduction of 'Sally, come up,' and of course I adhere to that. But Miss A., her music-master, and her mother have resolved long ago upon the 'Carnival of Venice.' Miss A. is destined by her music-master and her mother (the former having a pecuniary

interest in her) for the opera; and the public must have a taste of her quality. A battle ensues—'Sally' or the 'Carnival'?—which, if persisted in on both sides, can only be decided by the manager. Perhaps the manager declares in favour of 'Sally.' I am as much the enemy of Miss A. as if I had condemned her to the long clothes and the short part. Perhaps the manager declares for the 'Carnival.' Miss A. is spitefully triumphant, and my pet situation is spoilt.

Leading ladies are my rocks ahead—Miss A. and Miss B. my Scylla and Charybdis. But there are other shoals and dangers in that dramatic ocean which lies darkly before me. There are first and second walking ladies, a utility lady, and a speaking ballet-girl. They are not so imperious and absolute in their demands, but they must all be fitted with parts. They come to me and whisper in sly corners at the wings and at the back of the scenes:

'Oh, do write me a nice part.' 'And couldn't you give me a song?' 'You know in the last piece my part was a very bad one, only ten lines, and you promised next time to write me up.' 'Oh, I should so like a broadsword combat.'

It is harder to disappoint these ladies—these *Dece minores*—for they appeal to you in tones of supplication rather than of imperious command. They appeal to your pitiful consideration. They cannot afford to give themselves airs and throw up their parts, like those major deities—Miss A. and Miss B. You are disposed, of course, to please them, for your own sake, as well as for theirs. But what can you do? There can be only one Hamlet in the piece. You cannot even have two Horatios. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are inevitable and inexorable necessities. Oh, that speaking ballet-girl! My heart has bled for her many a time when she has come to me in her wings and short petticoats, to beg that I would give her

'a few lines, if it were only half a dozen.' Oh, she would be *so* much obliged to me. Her mother would be so much obliged to me. Her mother—an aged respectable-looking lady in a neat cap—manages to fall in my way. Could I do anything for her daughter Clara? she is very clever if she only had the chance; and she can sing. I resolve that Clara, while she waves her wand, to awaken the sleeping nymphs, shall have at least half a dozen lines to speak. They will be cut out before the piece is played, and I shall find Clara some evening weeping and sobbing at the wing, cutting me to the quick by her silent grief, while I am, perhaps, smarting under the open defiance of Miss A., triumphantly practising her 'Carnival' with the orchestra.

But I have said nothing of the male actors, the gentlemen, leading, walking, and utile, high and low comic, with whom I have to deal—to contend, rather, let me say. Well, one does not like to face his fiercest enemy first. The swimmer tries the shallows before he plunges into the deep sea; the fox-hunter begins with the ditch before he ventures the double feat of hedge and brook. Just at this moment—my reading comes off next week—those gentlemen, leading, walking, utile, &c., are the bane and terror of my existence. They have none of the conciliatory spirit of the ladies about them. They take up a hostile position towards me from the very first. They make up their minds that, however good the parts may be, they will not be good enough for *them*. There are the two leading comic men, Crinkum and Crankum, both with a tremendous swallow for lengths. Crinkum is thinking of me day and night—I know he is. Not that he has any personal regard for your humble servant. Not at all. I am perfectly aware that he regards me as a disagreeable necessity. But he knows that I am writing the Christmas piece. And this is what he is thinking—'The fellow is writing up Crankum's *part*, I'll be bound;' and then he consoles himself, as he

turns over to go to sleep, with—'Well, I sha'n't play the part if it ain't a good one.' Crankum is thinking of me too, not that he has any particular regard for me either; but he is perfectly satisfied, in his uneasy hungering after lengths, that I am writing up Crinkum. It takes me half my time when I am out of doors to avoid Crinkum, and the other half to keep out of the way of Crankum. I wouldn't be seen walking with Crinkum by Crankum on any account. Nor *vice versâ*. But it is a difficult thing to preserve a strict neutrality. I cannot prevent Crinkum coming and sitting beside me at the club, and whispering into my ear a suggestion about a new nigger melody he would like to sing; nor can I politely decline the request of Crankum to accompany him up a blind alley, that he may show me a break-down dance of his own invention. I have been strictly enjoined by the manager not to mention for whom the parts are intended. But, Lord bless you, Crinkum and Crankum knew all about it almost as soon as I did. They are both dissatisfied. Crinkum pretends to be; Crankum is in reality. Crinkum knows that he is to have the more important part of the two, but he will be as dissatisfied as Crankum if he should not find it up to the mark—that is to say, *his* mark—in respect of length and point. Crinkum and Crankum have no more confidence in me than the late Colonel Sibthorpe had in her Majesty's ministers. They will wait and see how I behave myself.

But there is a dread army at the back of Crinkum and Crankum—an army of which these two are but the portentous van. What do you think of the second low comedian for a party to wrestle with? I will tell you what he thinks of himself. He thinks that he is shamefully kept back. He thinks that he can act Crankum's parts better than Crankum, and Crinkum's parts quite as well. Perhaps he is not always guilty of inordinate conceit in so thinking. I have thought the same sometimes. Well,

you can imagine how it hurts a sensitive author—Crankum does not believe I'm sensitive—to give a part of a few lines to an actor who deserves to be in the first rank. But what can you do? The part is properly and naturally a small part, and you cannot enlarge it without giving it an importance which does not belong to it, and at the same time damaging your piece. Mr. Walker has only one telling line to speak, but you will see—Crinkum or Crankum will be jealous even of that. I know what Walker will do when he gets his part—consisting possibly of three or four sides of note-paper. He will glance at it contemptuously, turn up his nose, grunt, and slink away into a corner to grumble at me, the management, and all the world. But he thinks it is chiefly *my* fault. Then there is the very juvenile young man, who feels that he ought to play the heroine. He is sure that the manager would let him play Amina if I would only name it. What a sensation he could make by performing a comic dance in his sleep on the bridge! You can have no idea with what withering severity a first old woman—who has played Lady Macbeth in her time—can look at you when you offer her the part of the First Witch. And the second walking lady, who has played leading business at Wolverhampton: ought not she to play the Count at least?

For the last month or six weeks I have been sitting here at this desk with these people on my back—all of them going at me with whip and spur, urging me on, first in one direction, then in another. If I go a little too far with Miss A., Miss B. pulls me up with an indignant jerk. If I am galloping away rather too briskly with Crinkum, Crankum catches hold of the bridle, and nearly wrenches my head off. They sit upon me as the undone widows sat upon the arm of Sir Giles Overreach. They paralyse all my true dramatic instincts, and drive me to devices at which all reason revolts. The task allotted to me is just this: I am furnished with cloth enough to make gar-

ments for six persons, and I am required to clothe a dozen. It requires careful cutting, I can tell you, to leave even as much as a pair of gaiters for the twelfth man.

But don't imagine that I have enumerated all my enemies even now. I daresay you think the gentleman who leads the orchestra a very pleasant-looking person. Well, he *is* pleasant-looking, when he sits there fiddling his own compositions. But when you won't let him fiddle his own compositions, he is not so pleasant as he looks by a very long way. I know what he will want to do. He will want to introduce his new waltz as a chorus in the very place where I have calculated upon a great effect with 'Dixie's Land.' We shall have an awful fight about that, I feel certain; and if I don't allow Mr. Paganini to introduce that waltz somewhere, he will be sulky all through the rehearsals. I dread that conductor. His orchestra is a yawning gulf in my path. When I have written the last line of the piece, and got jolly on the strength of it, I shall be rudely awakened from my dream of duty performed and well-earned indulgence by a 'music call.' Perhaps not one of the songs I have marked down on the MS. suits the voice or the caprice of the lady or gentleman for whom they were intended. I have to sacrifice some of my pet verses, and substitute others not half so good. I have to write words for the 'Carnival of Venice.' Try that, my good sir, as a rudimentary exercise in burlesque writing. When you have got your words to suit the music, don't they read smoothly? Sensible and coherent, too, are they not? What do you imagine are my feelings, as an author, when Miss A. reads them over in presence of the company as a preliminary to singing them? When they are sung they are all very well; but oh, the torture of hearing them read! There is a high-art critic sitting in the stalls, watching the rehearsal. I feel inclined to shove my head into the big drum. And yet let Tennyson try the 'Carnival of Venice,' and what

will he make of it? The conductor and I will be at daggers-drawn, from the first day of the rehearsal to the last. Away from the stage we shall scowl at each other, and pass each other without so much as a nod of recognition. We shall not be sufficiently reconciled to shake hands, and drink each other's good health, until midsummer next, and then it will be getting on to quarrelling time again.

And, looming in the immediate future, I see two other tormentors bearing down upon me with stolid and inexorable looks. Who is this frowsy Polyphemus-looking man, who emerges from a cobwebbed cave under the stage to beckon me to a conference? He whispers of 'properties.' What can an author have to do with property, and in the plural too? Properties forsooth! 'Will you come and look at your properties?' *My* properties! Yes; I must go and look; I must waste a day taking stock of them, and seeing that they are in good condition. They consist probably of a crown and sceptre, a jewelled cup, a bugle, a sack, a club, a polished shield, a pig, a bottle of poison, a dagger, a bowl, a ball of worsted, a penny whistle. Were not all these articles carefully written down, as in an inventory, for the direction and guidance of Polyphemus? And yet he has forgotten the penny whistle and the sack upon which so much depends. And the shield which is to be borne by the delicate and fragile Miss B. weighs half a hundredweight, and is not polished. The bowl, my friend, is to drink poison out of—not to wash in—I don't want a basin; and as Miss A. has to carry the sack over her pink-velvet doublet I think she will prefer one that has not recently contained a hundred of coals.

'Oh, it will be all right at night.'

'I think I have heard that remark before, my friend, and I think I have found the assurance not borne out by the event. I can clearly see, Polyphemus, that a great

many hard words will pass respecting those properties. Crinkum won't wear that crown, you may depend upon it. It has to be knocked over his eyes, and there are projecting bits of wire there that he won't relish. That sceptre won't do. He has to knock the prime minister down with it, and Crinkum likes to hear the sound of his blows. You must make a stuffed one.'

Emerging from the cave of Polyphemus, I find lying in wait for me a bespattered man, wearing the worst coat, the worst hat, and the worst boots that ever were seen. A most important personage, nevertheless: the scenic artist—a gentleman and a scholar. What should we do without *him?* What would our puns and our funniments amount to without his charming pictures—his Bowers of Bliss and Dells of Delight? Is it too much to say that the scenic artist, at the present moment, is the great prop of the drama? He has always been one of the great props of the burlesque drama. He is one of the first persons whom the author has to consult. It is necessary that he should be provided at the very earliest moment with a plot of the scenes. He alone can tell you what can and what cannot be done. And it says a vast deal for his ingenuity and skill that there is very little indeed in his department that cannot be done. Every kind of pleasant illusion seems possible to the scene-painter. On the whole, he is the most agreeable personage in the theatre with whom I have to contend. But, mind, I have to contend even with him. We are sure to differ about the 'Illuminated Gardens of the Castle.' I am for the scene opening with all the revellers on the stage, drinking, and clinking their cups. The artist takes quite another view of the matter. He wishes the stage to be clear when the scene opens. What would *you* say in such a case, sir? Would you not insist upon the scene opening with the revelry? Of course you would. It is more natural, more life-like and bustling. To have the stage empty, and bring the

people on afterwards, will be to miss an effect. It will be tame and dull. But, then, just consider. Are you to concede nothing to this capital fellow, the scenic artist? Are *you* to have everything for your advantage, and *he* to have nothing for his? He wants the stage clear of people, because he is desirous that the audience may have a few seconds to examine the beauties of his scene, undistracted by other matters. Surely it would be selfish to deny him that. And yet the indulgence spoils your effect.

Mrs. Mouser will pounce upon me as I am threading my way towards the stage-door, fainting for the need of meat and drink, and a chair to sit down on and ease my weary limbs. Mrs. Mouser is the costumier attached to the theatre, and she asks me to be good enough to step into her room, and inspect some green tarletan which she has purchased for the ballet-ladies' petticoats. I must even have to do with the ladies' petticoats! Here am I in Mrs. Mouser's room (like a bull in a china-shop), picking my way among a litter of muslin skirts, gauze scarfs, white-satin shoes, tissue wings, and every kind of female and fairy adornment. Why should *I* be troubled about petticoats? What is it to me what sort of skirts the ladies of the ballet wear? It *is* something to me, though. In the last scene the ladies of the ballet perform a nuptial dance, and Mrs. Mouser is going to dress them in green skirts! Now a nuptial dance ought to be performed in white skirts.

Mrs. Mouser insists upon the green. She has bought the stuff on purpose. 'Look, what a lovely colour it is! real emerald green, quite a novelty. And it will look so well under the electric light.'

Half the green dresses are made up. If I must insist upon white ones, Mrs. Mouser will instantly drop that respectful manner which she has hitherto maintained towards me, and range herself on the side of my enemies. I must submit to the green skirts, or accept battle with Mrs. Mouser.

Miss A. comes in. 'Oh, do show Mr. Crambo my dress! White satin, trimmed with blue and gold; isn't it lovely? Do you like that? Will that do?' Miss B. comes in, and takes up a yellow-satin gown. 'There's the ugly thing you have condemned me to. Ugh! I shall look hideous. I'd rather not have been in the piece at all.'

Crinkum passes the door. 'Ah, Crambo, just come and see my wig; see, there's a sketch of my whole make up. How do you like it?'

'I don't like it at all, my dear fellow; it's a complete mistake.'

'Well, I sha'n't have any other. I've made up my mind to this.'

I get away at last, and breathe the pure air of freedom in Wellington-street. But, alas! there is no rest for the wicked burlesque writer. Mr. Midwinter, the costumier, darts out upon me from his shop to inquire whether it is to be 'fifteen Saracens and twelve knights, or twelve knights and fifteen Saracens.' And he imparts to me, in tones inviting commiseration and pity, that Crankum will be the death of him about those mediæval peg-tops.. He has made him six pairs, and none of them will please him. He wants them lined with wire now. I have heard of those peg-tops before, and I shall hear of them a good many times more before I shall have quite done with them.

'By the way,' says Mr. Midwinter, 'Mr. Porkison, the wig-maker, wants to see you about the Ogre's mask; perhaps you will step over to him.'

Slave that I am, I must go across to Porkison, and I must wait among the perukes until he has finished his tea. Porkison is always at his tea.

All this, and a good deal more to the same exhausting and vexatious effect, I have still to face and suffer. Meanwhile I am still hammering away at my puns and my rhymes. Whether well or ill, I must endeavour to be funny. In fun, as in everything else, these are high-

pressure times. A pun or a joke now and then will not satisfy the pampered taste of the public. I must strive to have one in every line. I must be continually straining after the grotesque and the absurd. I must throw aside any respect I may have for the proprieties of the English language. I must close my eyes fast to the dignity of literature. I must accept the grossest Cockneyisms in good faith. And yet this trifling is a very elaborate process. It calls all my faculties into play, and taxes my brain to the utmost stretch. It requires the observance of rules—rules of art, I may call them—as inexorably as painting, or sculpture, or poetry itself. Every line, every situation, every climax of absurdity, must be regulated by a variety of circumstances which require to be duly and carefully taken into account. Believe me, no part of this nonsense is ventured at random. It is all well considered, and precisely arranged. There is indeed much method in this madness. I firmly believe that a mere novice would prove more successful in attempting a comedy in five acts than in attempting a burlesque. The latter may be the lowest form of the drama, but it is certainly not the least difficult.

* * * * *

I read my Christmas piece to the manager and the assembled company yesterday. I dressed myself in my best, put the MS. in my pocket, and arrived at the theatre at five minutes to twelve precisely. I met some of the members of the company at the stage-door. They were in their best clothes, and their manner betokened a momentous occasion. They shook hands with me with cold distrust. Not a word beforehand as to the piece. I walked through the narrow stage entrance like a prisoner going to be tried. The members of the company hanging about looked at me doubtfully, as if they felt sure that I should be found guilty. I reach the green-room. There is a

Drawn by W. M'Connell.]

THE AUDIENCE IN THE GREEN-ROOM

table in the centre spread with a red cloth, and furnished with pens, ink, and paper. The prompter is busy at the table, arranging the parts which have already been copied. One by one, the actors and actresses called for the reading drop in, and take their seats round the room. At last the manager enters, and takes out his watch. With a cold indifference of manner he announces that it is time to begin. With a clammy hand I take out my MS. and open it. An uneasy action about the diaphragm affects my breath. I pause a minute to take courage, and then I begin with the name of the piece and the *dramatis personæ*. When I have come to the end of this, there is a rustling motion among the ladies, similar to that which occurs in church when the text is given out. They are settling themselves comfortably to listen. I look up for a moment at the circle of faces which surrounds me. Every face is cold and impassive as marble. Not an expression of encouragement anywhere. Even the call-boy, who has squeezed himself into the doorway, wears a solemn look. I begin, and read on for five minutes or so. No one has laughed yet. I am anxious to get to some of my best jokes, and I am reading fast—too fast. I come to those pet jokes; still no one laughs. I venture to look up at the circle of faces; every one is as fixed and solemn as if I were reading the burial service. I remember how Jenkins roared at that last couplet. Did not the veteran burlesque writer —— say that he envied me those lines? But not so much as a smile here. My heart is sinking within me; my lips are getting dry and parched, and I can scarcely articulate. The first old woman, who has played Lady Macbeth in her time, suggests a glass of water. I take it, and proceed more deliberately. But still no laughter. I proceed with the third scene, and at last I am interrupted by a 'Ha, ha!' from some one near the door. A chorus of laughter immediately follows. But I am not deceived by it. The person who laughed near the door was the musical

conductor, and it is proverbially a bad omen when the orchestra laughs. The surrounding ladies and gentlemen checked themselves immediately, lest I should think they were laughing at my joke. They relapse into solemnity instantly, and I proceed through scenes three, four, five, six, on to the end, without eliciting as much as a smile—nay, even

'Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable.'

It was a terrible ordeal I passed through when I read my first Christmas piece. I was not aware then that the ladies and gentlemen present make it a point of professional honour never to laugh or to encourage you with any sign of approbation whatever. And, mind, it is not so much that they grudge you their approval; the real truth is that each person is so intently occupied in trying to discover which part is intended for him (or her) that he cannot give his attention to anything else. He, or she, is in a feverish state of excitement to find out, if possible, what lines, what jokes, and what pieces of business are likely to fall to his, or her, share. When Miss A. discovers (or fancies she discovers) that she is to have the part of Prince Prettypet, she listens to nothing but Prince Prettypet's lines. Miss B. is possibly listening to Prince Prettypet's lines also. It is not very likely that either of them will commit herself to any signs of approval of a part which she has yet to fill up and test. Crinkum is deaf to all but the soliloquies of the Widow Pincher. Crankum's mind is haunted by the Ogre. The second comic and the utility people listen to cue lines and 'feeders' with unmitigated disgust. No one, except the stage-manager, regards your piece as a whole, and he perhaps is more intent in making out a property list than in listening to your jokes. Aspirants for the honours of burlesque writing, don't be cast down by these discouragements. They tend to damp the spirits, it is true; but bear up against them as well as you can. Some (in this line) regard them as good omens

rather than as bad ones. My experience leads me to believe that they are not far wrong in so thinking. I remember an occasion when every one in the theatre declared his positive belief that the burlesque would be a failure. The principals refused their parts, and only consented to accept them, at length, on the earnest solicitation of the manager. The piece was an uproarious success. It made the reputation of the author, and launched the theatre upon a career of success which it had never known before.

So yesterday when the members of the company rose, one by one, looked blank at each other, and strolled away to the stage to talk mysteriously and discontentedly in dark corners, I did not exactly lose all hope. I had seen those blank looks and heard those murmurs of discontent before. But I had also seen the pit swaying to and fro with genuine laughter, and heard the house resounding with the heartiest applause.

My Christmas piece was read yesterday; and now my trouble begins. Until the 26th day of this present month, day after day, without intermission, I shall have to stand on the stage, and hear my lines repeated over and over again until they will have lost all semblance of wit, or fun, or even meaning in the most remote degree. I have already told you what I shall have to encounter during this period. And when all is done, perhaps at the last moment the Lord Chamberlain, who has meantime been provided with a copy of the piece, will send down to say that we must omit certain lines referring to the Prime Minister, or the American war, or the taxes, or the Thames embankment and the Duke of Buccleuch. Perhaps I have written a smart song on the last-named topic, and rely upon it to finish up a scene with *éclat*. I must take it out; but there is no time for Crankum to learn another. The Chamberlain robs me of a sure effect just at a weak point of the piece. I indulge in more bad words!

So, my good sir, don't be so flippant when you go

down the stairs after witnessing the first representation of my Christmas piece on Boxing-night. Think of what I have had to endure in concocting this 'amusing trifle' for you. It is doubtless a more dignified task to prepare a budget than to write a burlesque; but, in all seriousness, I question very much if it is a more arduous one.

AN INTRODUCTION.

BURGLARIES, PAST AND PRESENT.

It was Christmas-eve. The snow lay deep on the ground. The eddying winds broke in fitful, not unmusical gusts. It was the good old traditional Christmas weather which we had last winter, and which happily broke the long line of damp, foggy, green Christmases. Such abnormal Christmases made the old people say that the world was changing its seasons, and everything falling into confusion. We had the grand old wassail cup in which was that venerable mixture called 'bishop,' in which I venture to say that the Anglican prelate proves himself a match for the cunning monks of the Chartreuse.

There were Gilbert Vernon, the eldest son of the house, and his fair sisters three, of whom the youngest, Ella, had just come home from finishing school for good, and the youngest brother from Eton. Then there was I myself—let me at once make the humiliating confession—the Idle Fellow of an idle college. I am the man for whose abolition Lord Salisbury has thirsted, and who has been held up to the social reprobation of the country. I get three hundred a year from my college, which hardly suffices for my modest wants; and I confess that I never go near it except on Audit-day, when I drink mightily Audit ale and draw satisfactory dividends. But for all that I think I do satisfactory work by pursuing a life of leisurely reading and reflection, and enlightening the world with my observations. However, I won my fellowship by passing one of the very stiffest examinations; and if you abolish these fellowships, men will not care to go in for very stiff

examinations for the mere fun of the thing—which fun is, in itself, inconsiderable. Then there was Gilbert's Oxford friend, Smithers, a very good sort of fellow, who was wavering whether he should concentrate the energies of his remaining terms on the Schools or on the river. Young Squire Warrington—whose Manor House was separated from this present manor by some seven miles of land shared between the two estates—had just gone, and the eldest shapely sister of the house, it appeared by tacit consent, had accompanied him to the front door alone. She returned with that remarkable degree of *insouciance* which made one involuntarily suspect that the young fellow had torn himself away from us with deeper reluctance; but he knew his mother would not go to bed on Christmas-eve till he had wished her good-night. The old Squire of the house had pleaded his infirmities for retiring soon after, but not until he had replenished the wassail-bowl with a further composition of bishop, and had seen the fire symmetrically arranged with layers of oak and coal, a mixture which makes the best firing in the world. When Warrington was gone, the eldest young lady of the house appeared to be musing and silent, and to have no other wish than to be so; while my young Oxford contemporary addressed himself to the second sister, whose good graces he was obviously cultivating. A charming old lady, an aunt of eighty years, acted chaperone, and, a little tired, retired into light slumbers on the softest and amplest of arm-chairs; and Gilbert, with Ella and I, did what open talk there was among ourselves. To little Ella, newly come from school, it was quite a new thing to be sitting up past midnight, and to her school-girl imagination the unearthly hour was suggestive of all sorts of possibilities.

'O Augusta!' exclaimed Ella, 'I am sure I heard a noise, a silent footstep. Are you sure that you put up the hall-door chain when Edward Warrington went away?'

'I think I heard Thomas locking the door and fastening the great bolts as I was just leaving the hall,' said Augusta.

'Because I am so afraid of ghosts and robbers,' said Ella, 'particularly robbers;' and then, with lady-like logic, she added, 'Let us talk about robbers.'

'There are no longer,' I said, 'the frightful sort of burglaries that there used to be of old days. From all I see, burglaries are not much to be apprehended, nor burglars the men to be specially avoided as they were.'

'How is that?' said the magnificent eldest girl of the dark eyes. 'If I thought that, I should never look under the bed the last thing at night or cover my head up in the counterpane.'

'The matter is very easy to be explained,' I replied, 'and the explanation lies in two causes. In the first place, people do not any longer keep their money in their houses. Everybody now, more or less, seeks an investment for money, or at least lets the money rest at a banker's. The day of hoarding money is over. The father of the great poet Pope realised twenty thousand pounds, and took out of it from time to time just what he wanted. There is precisely the same story told in the veracious chronicles of *Gil Blas*. Obviously there is here a great temptation held out to gentlemen of the burgling line; and I am only astonished that we have no authentic story of the house of the elder Pope of Binfield having been broken into by gentlemen of the burgling persuasion. Similarly I really believe that the substitution of electro-plate for real silver has had a considerable tendency to discourage the burglars. But the banking business has mainly done for them. Every man banks, and the banks receive even the smallest deposit. Then I have no doubt that the altered tone of our legislation has a great deal to do with it. People used to hang for burglary, but now they only hang for murder. A burglar knew that he

would be hung for burglary; and if he did anything worse society could do nothing more. The advantage of knocking the householder on the head was therefore obvious to the meanest burgling capacity. A bit of murder insured an easier robbery, and besides often defrauded the Crown of its principal witness; whereas, at the present day, if the real burglar is to be found, he knows perfectly well that a burglary will bring him nothing more than a sentence of penal servitude, with its chances and favourable possibilities; but if he kills, he will be most assuredly hanged. Consequently this type of burglar has altogether changed. He is no longer a bold stalwart ruffian, but a mean, whelpish, frightened, craven hound.'

'I often look over the assize intelligence and the police reports, and I never by any chance read of a burglary worth speaking of,' said Smithers.

'It was very different in the old time, by Jove!' said Gilbert Vernon. 'You heard stories of burglaries enough to make the hair of your head stand on an end. In the great lone farmhouses the farmers used to hide away bags of money that they had taken at market or were saving up for their rent. The burglars used to get scent of this, or at least suspect it. When they got into a house they would use regular torture in order to extort the secret of the money. The farmer's wife was generally thought to be the person who took charge of the money, and so they used to pop her on the top of the kitchen-fire.'

'Did they really do that?' asked one of the young ladies, with accent and look of horror.

'Almost invariably. It was quite *de rigueur;* and when she began to broil she generally gave up the secret of the money-bags.'

'O Gilbert, I never heard of such a thing, even in my time,' said the old lady—that best of aunts; 'and I can remember a lot of burglaries.'

'Just so, madam,' I said. 'That is what I was saying.

Romilly's abolition of the punishment of death in all cases except murder has really proved a great preventive of murder. It is now not worth while for a burglar to offer personal violence.'

'Burglaries at farmers' houses are not altogether uncommon,' said the old lady—the Miss Vernon of old. 'The farmers accumulate money, but they leave the sums on deposit at short notice and short interest at the bank, or see if they can lend it out through a lawyer. Now a curious thing happened in this part of the country only the other day. A farmer one market-day took in a large sum to our own lawyer and asked him what he could get for the use of it. The lawyer said he had a client who said he would give so much for the use of it. The farmer wanted more, but as the lawyer refused, he had to take it home with him again. It was afterwards remembered that the conversation happened in the office, that the office door opened at once upon the street, and was partly open during the discussion. The farmer returned home from the Saturday market; and, being churchwarden of the parish, he and his belongings went to church next morning. When he returned, he found the greatest difficulty in getting into his own house. He had his key, but the bolts were drawn and the windows fastened. The farmer, when he got in, with much misgiving went straight to his *escritoire*, and found that all the money had disappeared.'

'Was it never found out?'

'Never. It was always a mystery how the presence of the money at that particular time was known, and the robbery contrived.'

'He ought not to have left the house without some one to take care of it; or, at least, to have barred it up carefully or left a dog.'

'A servant—even a female servant—would have been the best protection,' I said. 'In these days a degenerate burglar would not venture to hurt a hair of her head.

But the servant might have been faithless: as a matter of fact, the police say most burglaries are put up by people inside your gates. I have rather got up the subject, because my own house, and my father's house, and a lot of my relations' and friends' houses, have been robbed by burglars.'

'I once knew a prison doctor,' said Smithers. 'He told me that the prisoners were a miserable set of rascals, but he came to know one or two burglars rather well. They told him that burglary had advanced to such a pitch of perfection that a burglar could make his way through any bolts and bars. The only things they did not like were bells on shutters and little barking terriers, which they could not cajole nor find means of poisoning. The doctor told me that he was very sorry to make an ungrateful return for their confidences, but when one of them was ordered the cat-o'-nine tails by the visiting justices, he had much pleasure in certifying that he was well able to bear it.'

'What would he be flogged for?'

'Insubordination and striking a warder. Oh, how the villain roared for mercy when he was tied up to the triangle!'

'I can tell you a very curious case of supposed burglary,' said our young host, Gilbert Vernon. 'It happened at Cheltenham, where I was spending an Easter vacation, and it was kept out of the papers, I suppose, lest the family concerned should be laughed at. The Mintons live at a great house up at Lansdown, and keep a lot of servants. In these days there is such a demand for servants that they find some little difficulty in keeping up their full number. That was the reason why they took in a fine dashing-looking housemaid without ascertaining all about her character. She had merely a written character, subsequently ascertained to be forged, but that was conveniently held to be sufficient. The odd thing about the

new servant was that she stipulated on having a room entirely to herself, and as the Mintons have more rooms than they know what to do with there was no difficulty about this. She was very active and attentive, with a sisterly affection for the maidens. It happened one day that a man called at old Minton's and announced himself as a detective from Scotland Yard. He explained that he had particular reasons for wishing to see all their servants. Seven servants were accordingly trotted out, including the gardener and foot-boy. The detective scanned all their faces and appeared disappointed. "And are these all your servants?" "Why, we couldn't exactly spare you all," said Mr. Minton; "there is Janet, the housemaid, laying the cloth for our luncheon presently." "I should like to see Janet particularly," said the detective. A message was accordingly sent for Janet; but Janet excused herself, saying that she was busy with some work which her mistress had ordered her specially to attend to. This of course made the detective all the more anxious to "interview" her. Accordingly handsome Janet was sent for, and directly she made her appearance the detective exclaimed, "That's the man we want!" It appeared that the excellent housemaid was nothing else than a burglar in disguise or "drag." It was never exactly ascertained whether he had procured this housemaid's place as the best disguise for evading the officers, or whether the design was to get up a burglary and relieve old Minton of his plate.'

Interjections of horror had accompanied the *dénouement* of the story. The burglary was nothing in comparison with the atrocity of the 'drag.'

'I will tell you a story now,' said little Ella, opening her wide eyes as widely as possible; 'one of my schoolfellows, who used to sleep in the same room with me, told it to all of us. She said that two girls were going to bed, and one of them, from an old habit, looked underneath the

bedstead. As she did so, she observed a man's leg nearly hidden by a box placed underneath the bed. Of course she was very much frightened, but she jumped into bed all the same, and began talking to the other girl. The other girl was very sleepy and begged her to be quiet, but she would not leave off talking. At last she brought round the conversation to the subject of robbers. "Sister Anne," she said, "if you happened to be in a room with a burglar, what would you do?" "I think I should be too frightened to do anything. I should want to get hold of a policeman, but I should be too frightened to do anything. What would you do yourself?" "Oh, I should call out murder at the highest pitch of my voice—just like this!" and then she screamed "Murder!" as loud as she could. You see this clever girl wanted to scream murder without letting the burglar know that she knew he was there. She hardly had finished her scream when her father tapped at the door and asked her what she was screaming for. "Oh, do call James, papa!" she said. Now James was in the smoking-room, the big brother of the family, but he came up directly he was wanted. "Papa and James," said the girl, "there's a robber under the bed;" and in another minute they had him out by the legs, and he was locked up till the police came.'

We testified our approbation of Ella's spirited narrative, and said that we were sure that under the same circumstances she would have acted with the same adroitness.

'I know an instance of still greater courage,' I said. 'It is that of a faithful little wife, who, hearing a noise in the kitchen one day when the servants were out, descended to see what was the matter. She found a man quietly packing up all the family plate in a bag. There was not a particle of fear in her composition. She was like Nelson, who when a lad asked what fear was. She said to the burglar, "You sha'n't leave this house until you put back every bit of silver that you have got there." The man did

so as meekly as possible, and was then allowed to sneak away up the area-steps. My friend was quite a weak small woman, but the anecdote shows the poor cowardly nature of the burglar of the present day.'

'I say,' said the boy from Eton, 'I call this very mild talk about burglars. I'm like the fat boy in *Pickwick* who told the old lady, Mrs. Wardle, that he wanted to make her flesh creep. Why don't you tell us more about putting the old birds on the top of the fire? I like the story where robbers came into a girl's room and she pretended to be asleep. They wanted to make sure, and flashed a light two or three times before her eyes, and drew a razor once or twice across her throat; and if she had shown the slightest signs of only pretending to be asleep, they would have killed her; but she carried it out as bravely as possible, and escaped. And it was through her they were afterwards hung, and I shouldn't wonder if drawn and quartered as well.'

'O you horrid boy!' arose the chorus of ladies.

'I will tell you a story,' I said, 'which was told me by old people when I was quite a youngster. It was called the Long Pack story, and refers to a Yorkshire farmhouse. Those were the days when there were no railways nor even macadamised roads. The pedlars did a great deal of business; and if you wander about in secluded wooded districts you will find that they do much business still in the old way. One sultry day a pedlar came to the door of a big Yorkshire farmhouse, towards the close of the afternoon, with a long pack and a short pack. From the short pack he produced ribbons and cheap jewelry, and he found a ready sale for his wares, as the farmer was affluent and let his children buy pretty well what they liked in a moderate way. Then the pedlar asked to be permitted to leave his long pack in the hall. He was going, he said, to the next village with his short pack, and as it would be very tiresome to carry the long one he asked permission

to leave it. This was readily granted by the good-natured folk at the farm. The long pack, a very long and remarkably upright one, was accordingly placed in the hall. There was scarcely any one at home but the mother and a lot of children, the men having gone to the markets. Now in the twilight one of the children had passed through the hall, and presently ran into the large kitchen declaring that he had seen the *pack move*. He was known, however, to be a child of remarkably vivid imagination, who could invent the most circumstantial stories of ghosts and robbers on an entirely fictitious basis. No notice was accordingly taken, except that his mother promised to spank him the next time that he invented lies. But when they were crossing the hall, going to bed, two or three of the children declared that they perceived both sound and motion in the pack. The nursemaid suddenly screamed out that there was a man inside it. The good wife turned very pale. Frank, the eldest boy, reached down the old loaded gun which hung in the hall. "It can't do very much mischief," he said; "and I'm sure that my father won't mind paying for it." Then all at once he discharged the gun straight at the pack. A deep groan issued from the pack, which fell prostrate. It really proved to contain a robber. He had been secreted in order to arise at night and let in his comrades. The place was fastened up as well as possible, and a message was sent off to the farmer and his sons to return home at once. About one in the morning there were noises outside; and the farmer fired off his gun in the open air. The pedlar never came back for his long pack.'

'Was the man killed?' asked Ella.

'That is what I really do not know,' I said. 'He was dangerously, if not mortally, wounded. At all events, if he was not killed at the time, he was hung afterwards.'

'You may always shoot a robber, I suppose?' said Miss Vernon.

'Not exactly. It all depends. If a thief is in your garden or outside your door, you must not shoot him. Bad as the man may be, he has not done anything as yet which requires his immediate execution. I have known people get into sad trouble by shooting at thieves. Worse still, they have shot their own friends, believing them to be thieves, and losing all presence of mind through their nervousness. But if a ruffian has actually got into your house, and won't go away when you tell him, and threatens you with violence, or you have reason to apprehend violence, then the law gives you a pat of encouragement when you take aim at the animated target.

'The Long Pack,' I continued, 'was a case where a young child saved a house from robbery. I can tell you a case where a mere infant of days did the same thing. I was taking a journey once through some of the beautiful Derbyshire valleys. In one of the deepest and most picturesque of them I found a fine old church whose altar-window had recently been filled with stained glass. Below the window ran the words, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained praise." I was told that the rector had placed this window in the church in token of gratitude, because an attempted burglary in his house had been frustrated through the crying of an infant. It was a winter night, and the young wife was lying in bed with her firstborn child cradled by her side. It was one of those good little babies who, I am informed, for I am not practically conversant with the subject, only coo and smile, and confine their crying within the smallest compass possible. It so happened that the rector was sleeping in a spare room at the other end of the house. It was just midnight when the mother was awoke by a loud unaccustomed wail from her infant of a peculiarly piercing note. Disturbed and worried as she was by her infant's cry she observed the time by her watch, lying close to the night-light. There was not much light to be got this way. A

bright moon was shining, however, and she advanced to the window to draw aside the curtain. To her horror and astonishment, just as she did so, she saw a man directly confronting or raised a little above her, just about to cut the pane of glass which would enable him to unfasten the window. This man stood on the window-sill; and the next moment another head, a most ferocious-looking head, raised itself to the level of his foot, evidently from a ladder below. She gave a short cry of terror, which made each man turn towards her with a menacing expression. In a moment she had caught up her baby in her arms, seized her watch, and rushed out of the room, and had the presence of mind to fasten the door with an outside bolt. She hardly had done so, when a tremendous crash of glass told her the men had burst through the window into the bedroom. She ran at once into the room where her husband was sleeping. He quickly understood how things were, and fetched a loaded fowling-piece out of the dressing-room. A second crash now told that the robbers had hurled themselves with such violence against the bedroom door that they had forced the bolt from the fastenings. The three men rushed into the bedroom. The rector lifted up his gun, while his young wife clung fearful to his side, and said,

"I tell you three men solemnly that, if you move another step in this direction, I shall fire."

"You may shoot one, but the rest will murder you," said one of the burglars.

"The gun is not loaded; close in!" cried another.

The man, who seemed the leader of the set, resolutely advanced, crowbar in hand. The rector took deliberate aim and fired. The foremost man dropped, badly wounded. This threw the other two men into the greatest consternation. The good wife was ringing the bell violently; the struggle was more equal; help might be coming; their comrade might be dying. Suddenly the two men retreated,

carrying their wounded comrade between them. In the mean time a servant-maid, who slept in the next room, hearing the noise of firearms and dreading robbery and murder, let herself down from the bedroom-window, and in her nightdress, just as she was, ran across the lane to her grandmother's house. It was with difficulty that the grandmother was made to understand the nature of what had happened. She rubbed her eyes, she blessed herself, she said what a shame it was for other people to go into other people's houses; she was sure they would never come to a good end; things were very different in her time; and so on. At last, when she understood the position of matters, she rushed into her bedroom, barred the door, and became *non compos mentis* for a time. The girl, however, succeeded in arousing some neighbours, who at once went to get assistance. And now the alarm-bell of the rectory was sounding far and wide over the snow. They tracked the robbers for a long way by their footsteps and the marks of blood on the snow. Eventually they were obliged to give up the pursuit.'

'And they got quite off?'

'Well, hardly that. The wounded man was discovered and one other. They were found at Birmingham, and received heavy sentences, which they richly deserved. Then the rector, believing that he would have been robbed, and perhaps murdered, save for the infant's cry, put up a memorial painted window in his church.'

'I declare I shall not be able to sleep a single wink all night,' said Ella. 'I am sure I hear some burglar just now going up the back stairs, and feel convinced that he wears a crape disguise and has a dark lantern in his hand.'

'Exactly, Miss Ella; you began this precious talk, and insisted on going on with it,' said Reginald.

'I wonder if we should be strong enough to-night to fight a gang of them,' said Miss Vernon.

'We should be all the stronger if we had Squire Warrington here. Shouldn't we, miss?' asked the schoolboy.

But Ella really did look frightened and discomposed, and her aged aunt drew her gently towards her.

'We have better help than any human help. God will take care of His little girl. He does not forsake us in the dark. He is stronger than the strength of violent and wicked men. I remember a story of a lady going to bed; she little thought while she was undressing that there was a robber secreted under the bed. She knelt down to say her prayers. One collect she spoke in a clear firm voice: "Lighten our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord; and by Thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of Thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ." The words went to the thief's very heart: they reminded him of the old innocent days, when the beautiful words were familiar to him, and he had some sense of their blessedness and meaning. When she was asleep, he quietly emerged from his hiding place. Some time afterwards it came to the knowledge of this lady how he had intended to rob, how he was prevented, and how he became a hardworking honest man. I have heard a still more remarkable story, but am not quite certain about the details. A good Christian woman was retiring to rest in a lonely room in a lonely house. The very last thing she became aware that a man was secreted in the tall closet of her bedroom. Her first idea was that she would rush forward, scream, and alarm the household. But full faith came to her in her heart that she should suffer no evil. She deliberately lay down to rest. More than that, she blew out the candle by her bedside and rested in utter darkness. But she did not rest in silence. She repeated aloud inspired words of comfort and hope, and sang sweet peaceful hymns. At last a voice from out the darkness spoke to her; it was the voice of a penitent

despairing man, thoroughly subdued by what he had heard, and now abhorring the crime which he had meditated. She gave the robber her hand in the darkness and told him how he might escape, and that if he would come and see her she would put him in the way of obtaining a decent livelihood. And so it happily came to pass that he became a reformed and useful man.'

'I think we ought least of all to be nervous at Christmas,' I said. 'You remember Shakespeare:

> "Some say that ever, 'gainst that season comes
> Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
> The bird of dawning singeth all night long:
> And then, they say, no spirit can walk abroad;
> The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
> No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm;
> So hallow'd and so gracious is the time."'

The good aunt kissed Ella on the forehead, and whispered even better words: 'He that keepeth thee will not slumber.'

Were I only twenty years younger I should like to look forward to a time when I too could console and protect little Ella.

THE MAGIC PITCHER.

BY J. ASHBY-STERRY.

It was once on a time, as the story-books say,
There lived in the Schwarzwald a Baron so gay,
So jovial and hearty, so fond of good cheer,
And he passed all his days there in hunting the deer;
His evenings he spent at his Schloss, where, I'm thinking,
But little went on besides eating and drinking:
And old chroniclers tell us—and they ought to know—
That the 'carryings-on' there were not *comme il faut*.
It was long, long ago—at a most remote date—
When the matter occurred which I have to relate;
It was long before days of madness and worry
Engendered by railways with *Bradshaw* and *Murray;*
Long before there were tables at which you might bet,
Or could lose half a fortune each day at roulette—
Or they made cuckoo-clocks and those horrid cigars,
Or the *Führer* was written by Dr. Carl Schnars;
In short, long before we arrived at that line meant
By moderns whenever they talk of refinement.
The depths of the forest were marshy and sodden,
The trees were unhewn, and the grass was untrodden;
There was scarcely a hut or a human abode,
There was hardly a pathway, and much less a road!
Whilst the glades were so haunted with spirits of evil,
Or good little fairies, who played such vagaries—
With sprites ever tricksy, and brownie and pixie,
Who could not be quiet, but made such a riot—
That the forest itself was a forest primeval!

Drawn by Alfred Crowquill.]

THE MAGIC PITCHER.

There the Baron resided—I said this before—
And perhaps the digression you'll reckon a bore
(But I must introduce this little variety
To show his high *status* in foreign society).
Now he owned all the land there—a very good reason—
And lived in a castle ancient and bold,
With cellar beneath constructed to hold
Large vats filled with wine of number untold,
Which served very well to keep out the cold
When his guests came to see him and hunt in the season.
'Twas hunting one day, that the Baron so gay,
And his friends who drank deeply at nights,
Each began to feel dry, and anxious to try
Any liquor to set him to rights.
The Baron spoke up, as he drained off a cup,
And scowled at his friends, and he curst—
'I'll give yellow gold, or a butt of wine old,
To him who will quench me this thirst!'
They gave him cold water—he roared like a lion—
It fizzed off his tongue as it would a hot iron;
They filled up the wine-cup, filled higher and higher,
But poor Baron Fritz became drier and drier;
Till just as he thought he was going to expire
There arose from the grass a most comely young lass,
Whose beauty and brightness none e'er could surpass.
As sweetest music her approach then heralded,
She looked like a picture Mr. Fitzgerald did,
With her long fair hair all rippling down,
Soft gauzy wings and a jewelled crown;
With eyes so blue and so wondrous bright,
They made Fritz wink with their brilliant light!
(The Baron tried hard then his fears to whistle down,
As light she swung on the finest of thistle-down.)
'I'm good Fairy Ripple,' she sang with a laugh;
'And bring you my pitcher and ask you to quaff;

It will moisten your throat and will brighten your eye;
As long as you have it you'll never feel dry.
Drink, but not deeply, or some day you will rue
Receiving the pitcher I give unto you!'
Then most sweetly she smiled, and, ceasing to sing,
Soon flew out of sight on a dragon-fly's wing.
Then Fritz quickly started, and gave a great yawn,
And looked round for his friends, but found they were gone;
Then thought he'd been dreaming, but as he jumped up,
Saw sparkling beside him the gold-jewelled cup.
He seized it at once, and he took a good draught,
He sprang and he danced as he shouted and laughed.
'Twas better than iced seltzer-water and hock,
And cooler than licking a Wenham Lake block;
'Twas finer than Clicquot or soda-and-b.,
It strung the nerves better than strongest of tea.
Baron Fritz, after drinking, hung the cup by a chain
Round his neck, in case e'er he should want it again.
And he very soon did so, for homewards he rolled,
With his lips always touching that pitcher of gold.
Said he, 'I'll amuse my guests over their tipple
With the wondrous tale of the good Fairy Ripple.'
(He found all the time to himself he'd been talking.
O'er shoes in the water so cold he'd been walking.)
Then he wished that his castle was somewhat nigher,
And could not make out why the road was not drier—
Was really afraid that the water was higher—
When he heard a moan, and an awful groan!
And the Baron then found he was not alone!!
A fierce gaunt Dryad, with tangled rough ragged head,
He saw there, shaking his ugly old jagged head:
A gnarlèd old face, a barky nose,
Branches for fingers, tendrils for toes:

Out of his forehead growing two trees,
To nod and sway in the evening breeze.
He shouted at Fritz, and then fiercely he frown did—
'Put down that pitcher, or you're sure to be drownded!'
O horror! Fritz started, for 'neath the moon-gleam,
From his pitcher he saw there was flowing a stream;
Then he felt that his blood was beginning to freeze,
As the water came rippling up to his knees!
He tugged at the pitcher, 'twas piteous to see,
For the chain was entangled, he could not get free!
Then reeling and staggering over the boulders,
He found that the water was up to his shoulders.
In a moment he tripped in the current so fleet,
Next he stumbled and fell, and was borne off his feet.
Sure a sturdy swimmer like Fritz cannot drown,
But that pitcher is heavy, and weighs him down.
The water closed o'er him and swept him away,
As he thought he heard voices seeming to say—
'Drink, but not deeply, or some day you will rue
Receiving the pitcher I give unto you!'

A NICE MINCE PIE;

OR THE MERRY MAIDS OF MIDDLESEX.

I.

THE PROVOCATION.

WE met; 'twas in a crowd, in a handsome suburban residence near London—in as well-dressed a crowd as you would wish to see—a model of gaiety and good behaviour. 'Twas in a waltz—and after supper—that the unlucky and eventful words were spoken. Not that *I* have any occasion to regret them; quite the contrary. All's well that ends well. People said at the time that I was disappointed. I might be, for half a minute; but I am sure that it has turned out all for the best. I wouldn't exchange with any—let us say with anybody, the better to maintain my incognita—but I would *not* exchange with any—no, not with the happiest creature in the world.

Mr. Howard Jones—a gay bachelor just three-and-twenty, the proprietor of a pleasant villa and a pretty income left him by a maiden aunt—was waltzing perhaps his twentieth waltz, decidedly flushed and flurried with champagne. It is curious that the male sex only are affected by the sparkling beverage. Women, like Turks —considering and feeling it as merely a palatable variety of seltzer-water—reckon it for nothing in their potations.

Now Mr. Howard Jones presented to the world the anomaly of a weak and timid soul safely incased, like a lobster in its shell, within a strong and stalwart body.

Whether it was the result of hopeless simplicity or of adolescent ignorance and inexperience, time and training in female society would show. Perhaps the latter might be the case. The French have a saying, 'Si jeunesse savait! Si vieillesse pouvait!' ('If youth only had the sense! If old age only had the strength!') Tall and well-made, enjoying brilliant health, he was bashful as a babe in a lady's presence. Good-natured, neither bright nor stupid, his unfortunate timidity made him seem duller than he really was. Frolicsome girls said they felt an inclination to give him a push, to set him going. And yet he longed to pay his court to many a fair one, though he never could summon the courage to do so. And so, like many other cowards, he resolved at last to make one despairing plunge. He *would* conquer his shyness—and he had. It remained to be seen whether the cure would be permanent.

It was early in the morning (a quarter past one) of the 2-th of N-v-mb-r 186- [a greater precision in our dates would be indiscreet], that Mr. Howard Jones was thus recklessly waltzing with high-coloured cheeks and excited brain. His partner at the time was a Mdlle. Petitose, a charming French blonde, not more than eighteen, who had learnt English in her convent school, and whose parents had crossed the Channel to fulfil an important commercial mission. French people never travel for nothing; travelling for travelling's sake is a thing unknown. Mdlle. Petitose seemed excited too, not with champagne, but with her situation. Mr. Jones had offended her notions of etiquette by talking—remarkably confidential talk too—during their waltz. In her own country, she might have manifested displeasure; but here, as she afterwards observed to her friends, 'I supposed I must do at R-r-rome as oder peoples does at R-r-rome.'

A knot of pretty girls, on the foremost seats, were whispering as they watched Jones's phenomenal perform-

ances. They had all pleaded fatigue *that* waltz, for the sake of comparing notes together. Chaperones and wall-flowers posted behind leaned forward their elaborately decorated heads to listen. Their curiosity was roused by what they could not hear, and still less understand. Something was evidently in the wind; it was the duty of duennas to find out what.

'I have heard that it never rains but it pours,' said a nameless young lady whom her friends addressed as 'Goody,' and whose individuality we will not further particularise; 'but I never knew such an instance as this.'

'I thought he was serious, though it was very strange,' pouted Laura Leeson, a sweet little cherub, scarcely seventeen, promising, however, to become the very duplicate of her honoured mamma, now fat, fair, and forty. 'At first, I really thought he *was* serious; but from what you say, he must be crazy.'

'Abominable!' angrily ejaculated Miss Stephens, threatening to vent her rage in the destruction of a beautifully embroidered handkerchief. 'Shameful! To trifle with our feelings in that way!'

Poor Sarah Stephens was the most indignant of the group and the loudest in her cries of injured innocence. Nevertheless, she was not the youngest, but, as it happened, the very reverse. There were rumours that she was three-and-thirty—people will utter such shocking calumnies! When pleased (not always the case) she looked six-and-twenty; when displeased, older than we dare put in print. Notwithstanding which, she still remained attached to the corps of dancing juveniles. An only child of wealthy parents, who were well got-up, well-bred, well-considered—circumstances greatly in her favour—she had nevertheless been hitherto left to bloom in single blessedness. She was not the first girl under similar conditions who had cast eyes on a junior admirer; neither was she the first in the world to accept the advances of a

handsome simpleton. So we won't be hard upon her weakness. She *was* vexed, and did not attempt to conceal it. 'Heartless treachery!' 'Disgraceful conduct!' expressed her sense of Jones's behaviour.

'I am sure *I* cannot understand it!' said Norah Longchamps, almost whimpering, as she stooped her tall lax figure to confer with her friends. 'I was not astonished at what he said to me; because—because—no matter what. But that he should say the same to other girls as well—I'm sure I cannot comprehend it.'

'No, dear! Nobody believed you would,' Miss Touchwood sharply and abruptly observed. This young lady, a baronet's daughter, had lost both her parents in early girlhood, and had consequently acquired a habit of deciding for herself in spite of governesses and the heads of 'Establishments for Young Ladies (Limited).' 'Norah cannot understand it! But Norah never promised to set the Thames on fire. Perhaps one of these days, dear Norah, you'll try, especially if Mr. Jones will offer to help you.'

'Don't be unkind, Emma; it's very annoying. You tease me because you are annoyed yourself.'

'Not I, indeed,' replied Emma, laughing. 'It is too ridiculous for that. A nice young gentleman is Mr. Howard Jones! To offer to five different girls in the course of one ball! Assuredly, as Goody says, it never can rain but it must pour outright. For, I will bet my diamond brooch against Mrs. Pinchbeck's porcelain cameo, here comes another rival, and consequently favoured fair one Number Six!'

Mr. Howard Jones advanced with Mdlle. Petitose on his arm, to restore that young lady to her mamma's protection. Then, with an unsteady bow, he retired.

'Well, what did he say to *you*, ma chère?' the other girls inquired, without giving her time to resume her seat.

'O mon Dieu, I do not know; I cannot tell. He was

veree dr-r-roll; quite original; notting but eccentricity Britannique.'

'Did he ask, ma chère, if you liked mince pie?' Miss Touchwood significantly and pointedly inquired.

'O yais: he invited me to lunch off mince pie at his villa to-morrow after-midday. He told me, "So many mince pies you eat before Ch-r-istmas, so many happy year

shall you have." He said he should like to eat mince pie togeder wit me every day of dem long happy year—'

'The wretch!' gasped poor Sarah Stephens, frantically waving her embroidered handkerchief, which was to her what the fan is to the Spaniard, the knitting-needle to the German, the pipe to the Turk. 'The traitor! he said the very same thing to me!'

'And to me too!' sighed Norah Longchamps. 'But I shouldn't wonder, after all, if he was thinking of me when he wished to eat mince pie all the year round.'

'Silly girl!' exclaimed Miss Touchwood. '*You* are not a mince pie, nor anything half so artistical. Don't you see he's a wooden cuckoo-clock, with only one song to sing on every occasion? And he has been wound up too tight,' she archly added. 'The wheelwork in his head is in a buzz.'

'But dis mince pie, mesdemoiselles, about which you make so much talk? Mince pie—what is dat?' the fair Petitose, greatly puzzled, inquired.

'Don't you know?' little Laura exclaimed, in astonishment. 'Why, mince pie is apples, and beef, and currants (what you call "raisins de Corinthe"), and suet, and salt, and sugar, and almonds, and—and—'

'Dat must be ver-ree nastee!' interrupted the Petitose, with a visible shudder running through her pretty frame.

'Don't forget the brandy, dear,' Norah gravely added; 'nor yet the Malaga raisins, nor the candied citron, nor the grated nutmeg—'

'But all dat mixture shall be ver-ree, ver-ree nastee indeed,' pertinaciously objected Mademoiselle.

'Oh no, it isn't,' Goody explained. 'On the contrary, it's very nice; especially if you make it up before Stir-up Sunday,* and stir it up well every Sunday afterwards.'

* The Sunday next before Advent. So called by housewives who cannot separate the religious from the culinary observances of the year.

'Aunt Mary, however,' Laura said, 'uses tongue instead of beef; and she also puts in ground ginger, and cloves, and bruised coriander seed.'

'And grandma flavours with pine-apple rum, Madeira wine, and orange-flower water,' chimed in Miss Stephens, forgetting her griefs in the increasing interest of the mince-pie formula.

'As if *her* grandmother could possibly be alive,' Miss Touchwood slyly whispered to Goody, 'unless she has survived to be a hundred and fifty! Ask her what her great-great-grandma flavours with.'

'Miss Pinshaw's mince pies for the charity children,' said Norah, in a subdued tone of voice, as if communicating an important secret, 'have carrots and lemon-juice, and common grocers' plums, and orangé-peel, and allspice, and beef dripping, and bread crumbs, and treacle, and chopped liver, and ginger wine, for economy's sake, instead of the more expensive articles; and really the children enjoy them much.'

'Poor things! Ignorance is bliss,' the lively Emma ejaculated. 'But you have forgotten the essential and indispensable crust, which is to hold the various ingredients together. Norah, with her usual cleverness, would set about making pies without pie-crust; but there are things which can *not* be dispensed with:

> "How should he cut it without a knife?
> How should he marry without a wife?"

which brings us back to our common friend, Mr. Jones. He seems apprehensive of the latter difficulty, and has taken his measures accordingly. What shall we do, young ladies?—do, pray, tell me what we *shall* do, to meet his very considerate proceedings?'

'If we each of us,' Miss Stephens benevolently suggested, 'brought a separate action for breach of promise of marriage against him?'

'Poor fellow! No,' objected Goody; 'that would be too cruel a punishment.'

'Let us chop him into mincemeat,' said Laura Leeson.

'And eat him afterwards,' Emma Touchwood added. 'It is just that we'll do. We *will* chop him into mincemeat. Only let me manage the affair, and we will treat our indiscriminate admirer to a mess which he *may* find savoury if not sweet. Will you be guided by me, young ladies? Do you accept me for your commander-in-chief?'

'We do! We do!' was the general reply, with only one dissentient voice.

'You must not be so ver-ree cr-r-ruel, mes chères demoiselles,' it expostulated. 'I shall nevere, no, nevere shall I see poor Mistere Howard put *to debt*.'

'Oh yes, you will though,' said Emma Touchwood, in a tone which implied that implicit obedience was to follow. 'I shall go and consult your mamma about it—indeed the rest of your mammas in general.'

II.

THE ORDEAL.

MR. JONES, as far as his memory would help him, certainly did not find next day that his evening's amusement bore the morning's reflection. But he was not very clear as to what *had* occurred. His eyes were heavy, and his thoughts confused; but he had a strong impression that he had made a fool of himself. He had rushed coarsely and irreverently into matters, where creatures superior to himself, without being angels, might well hesitate to tread. It was as if he had cried on the house-tops, or advertised in the *Times*, 'Wanted, a young "person"' (that is the phrase—a 'person' in vernacular English being of the

feminine gender only) 'to complete Mr. Howard Jones's preparatory schooling, to take care he does not fall out of a two-pair window, and to make herself generally useful as keeper to a young gentleman of fortune and feeble intellect.'

Had he talked indiscreetly to one girl only, the mischief would have been bad enough; but when he remembered that he had said, he did not remember what, to he did not at all remember how many, he fell into a fit of deep repentance. He wished he hadn't done it; yes, that he did. What to do now he did not know, and would have given something to anybody that would tell him. His breakfast muffins got cold and leathery before a guiding ray had enlightened his soul. His gropings in the dark were suddenly interrupted by the sharp short stroke of the postman's knock.

Mr. Jones's correspondence was not large. The post seldom brought him much besides his monthlies, his weeklies, and his daily paper. Written invitations have an aspect of their own; cards in envelopes speak for themselves; Mr. Jones was therefore startled at beholding the silver salver decorated with four unmistakable billets-doux. The first was rose-pink, with a blush-white seal. The second was blue-gray, sealed with bottle-green wax, which had either been clumsily smeared in the sealing, or the writer had intended to send a 'kiss.' The third was of ordinary cream-laid paper, with a big family seal of vermilion wax. The fourth, of stout white ivory paper, bore three different seals of three different hues, and had altogether a formidable official look, as if it came from the Board-room of some Ladies' Mutual Anti-jilt Assurance Society.

With a beating heart he took the rose-pink envelope, opened it, and read as follows:

'Miss Touchwood presents her compliments to Mr. Howard Jones, and according to invitation, proposes to have the pleasure of lunching with him at two o'clock

this afternoon. Whatever pie she, Miss Touchwood, partakes of, she strongly advises Mr. Howard Jones to eat humble pie. In that case, though deserving to fear the worst, she leniently allows him to hope the best.'

'Pie? Mince pie?' he muttered. 'I now remember mince pie was running in my head; how it was made; whether young ladies ever made it now; whether they ever ate it; whether it was better before Christmas or after. Confound mince pie, and everything belonging to it! "Though deserving to fear the worst." That means her two big brothers, I suppose. I don't care much for them; I care more for her. "Leniently allows him to hope for the best." The best! That's impossible. She's too pretty by half ever to accept *me*. She isn't tall —black-brown hair and hazel eyes—quite a little thing, in fact. I could carry her about in my arms; glad of the job too. And so sharp! Knows what she's about; never loses *her* wits. If I had only said nothing to the other girls! Ah! let us see what we have in *this* one.'

The bottle-green seal was broken without any response to the missive kiss; and with some difficulty Mr. Jones deciphered a series of pothooks, which, being interpreted, stood thus:

'Deer sir,—I little thought you wood wound my hart by such an act of cruel falsewood as to ask other parteners to taste off your minse py. You proposed it to mee the first of awl, and I shall sirtainly come to claim my rites at too a clock this after none. I hope by this time you sea your error in not bestowing your pyson one young Lady Only who is deer Sir yours to come and

'NORAH LONGCHAMPS.'

'Silly creature!' muttered Jones, somewhat contemptuously, 'to accuse me of "cruel falsewood" and of bestowing my "pyson" more than one young lady. Fine girl, nevertheless; perhaps, however, a little too long. If she

should really be fond of me! Poor thing! I shouldn't much wonder.' And he complacently took unction to his soul at the idea of that pleasing incident. It even made him forget his troubles for a moment.

'But what's this double-crested affair?' he asked himself, as his eye caught the brilliant seal bearing a tiger rampant and a blazing bombshell.

His eyes opened very wide as he read:

'Dear sir,—In order to avert unpleasant consequences *from yourself*, and to avoid giving occasion for ill-natured gossip, I have been advised to *accept* the invitation you *so pressingly* gave me for two o'clock this day, the 2-th of November.

'It is needless to say that *Mince Pie* is to me a matter of perfect indifference (indeed I regard it as merely a *pretext*), provided your *explanation* be satisfactory. As I cannot suspect you of the baseness of trifling with a young girl's fresh affections, I therefore remain, sir, until two o'clock, Your obedient servant,

'SARAH STEPHENS.

'P.S.—After our interview, Papa will call, accompanied by his legal adviser, at any hour you please to fix.—S. S.'

As for the letter with the triple seals, it turned out, on inspection, to be a joint communication from Laura, Goody, and Mdlle. Petitose. It set forth their wrongs, reproached him with cruelty, and also announced the visit of the trio at two.

It was already past one in the afternoon. The fall of these thunderbolts was therefore imminent. A bright idea suddenly struck him. He'd be 'not at home' actually, and not merely hypothetically and in theory. He would go out and breathe the air, to calm his nerves and get an appetite for dinner. Before he could execute the manœuvre, a carriage drove up to the door, which, being

opened, admitted three damsels to the entrance-hall, where he had come to take his hat and gloves.

'Here I am, sir,' said Miss Touchwood, offering her hand, 'according to promise.'

'And I too,' Norah added, very lackadaisically.

'And I likewise, at your service, sir,' said the Stephens, with a curtsy of the stiffest quality.

'And here,' continued Emma, 'are our three young injured friends, supporting each other in Mr. Leeson's carriage. How d'ye do, dears? We've met to perform a painful task. Let us proceed at once to the Council Chamber, the Court of Justice—the drawing-room. Mr. Howard Jones, your arm, if you please, sir.'

The swain obeyed, and led the way to the apartment in which he could easily guess his own condemnation was to be pronounced. While mounting the stairs his companion whispered, 'Be a man, Howard Jones, and not a boy; be as cheerful as your nerves will let you; attend to what I say and do; and don't be afraid of a few merry girls.'

He thanked her with a look of such intelligence as to indicate that his young ideas were beginning to shoot.

'Take your seats, ladies,' Miss Touchwood said, addressing them as soon as the drawing-room was reached, and assuming the office of presidente without waiting to be voted into the chair. 'The culprit—a *great* culprit, isn't he?—is before you. His only hope lies in surrendering unconditionally—in throwing himself upon your mercy. In token of which, sir, go into that corner, and, by way of humiliation, sit on a stool there and repeat some edifying nursery rhyme.'

Howard Jones took the hint like one inspired. He went into the corner, squatted down on a footstool, and humorously acting his part, repeated—

'Little Jack Horner
Sat in a corner,
Eating a Christmas pie;

He put in his thumb,
And pulled out a plum,
Saying, "What a good boy am I!"'

The girls laughed heartily at Jones's mimicry—a talent of which they never suspected him capable—and the laugh put them into even better humour than they were before.

'Come from your corner, good boy Horner,' the little presidente commanded. 'Take your seat, sir, before us on that music-stool of repentance. Sister Stephens, counsel for the prosecution, the prisoner is at your disposal.'

'I wish him well out of it,' Norah sighed.

'You remember the offer you made me last night?' his accuser asked, in a tone of severity. 'You shake your head as if you didn't. You don't? Well, I do; and it's my turn now, sir. I have a metagram—a metagram, sir—here which has never been published; and unless you guess it correctly in all its changes, I shall hold you to your proposal and its consequences. Listen:

'Deep *beneath*, not *on*, the land
On four well-balanced legs I stand,
Half consonants, half vowels. Try
To guess my secret history.
Dark I am as Sheba's queen;
As wealthy too; with silver sheen
I often glitter. Gems and gold
Unseen bedeck my bosom cold.'

'That's a delightful puzzler,' said Laura Leeson. 'I wonder whose admirer, whose gallant knight, Mr. Howard Jones will prove himself now. Will he be Miss Stephens's after all?'

Miss Touchwood, passing before him, as if to reach a book of prints, turned her head towards him, and, in a whisper inaudible to the others, breathed out 'MINE.'

'MINE!' shouted Jones, clasping his hands with joy, and yet scarcely daring to believe his ears.

'How very provoking! He has guessed it right,' said

Sister Stephens, in great surprise. 'It *is* a mine. But there is more to follow. It goes on thus: listen again:

'Change my first letter, and I am
What made the worthy sire of Ham
Forget himself—'

Here Miss Touchwood slyly traced with her finger on Jones's open hand the letter W. Miss Stephens continued:

'—what made Jones (Howard)
So base a knave, so sad a coward,
As to persuade a helpless maid
That he was serious when he said
That he with her would eat mince pie,
Until it were his lot to die
Of love—unless of indigestion,
Or drink, or—'

'WINE!' again shouted Jones, delighted. 'It's no use going on with the metagram any further. The answer to this change *must* be wine!'

'The cap fits,' said his questioner sharply. 'I was going to give him kine, and line, and bine, and sine, and tine, and vine, to exercise his ingenuity; but, as he says, it's of no use now. He has got the clue, and *I* give it up. He's as 'cute this afternoon as—a knitting-needle.'

'But mayn't I tease him,' asked fair Petitose, 'with my cr-r-ross questions and my cr-r-rooked answers?'

'And mayn't I tell him,' Laura inquired, 'my horrible story about Madame Bluechignon, who murdered her husbands and kept their scalps in a closet to make new chignons, when—'

III.

THE REPARATION.

'AFTER what has happened,' Miss Touchwood interrupted, 'it is needless to beat longer about the bush. *Of course* he *must* marry one of us.'

'Certainly,' replied Goody, struck with the idea; 'it *could not* well be otherwise. The only difficulty now will be to decide *which* of us is to have the honour of his hand.'

'Which of us, if you please, young ladies,' Miss Touchwood asked, raising her voice—'which of us is to undertake the task of rearing this young gentleman to the age of reason?'

'Perhaps the best way will be to draw lots for him,' little Laura Leeson diffidently suggested. 'I will write each of our names on six bits of paper; I will fold them all exactly alike; we will put them into that china vase, shake them well up, and permit the dear creature to draw for us blindfold on his knees.'

'That won't do,' interposed Miss Touchwood. 'It will be far too great a condescension on our part to let *him* draw for *us*. Take six similar pieces of paper; write *his* name on *one;* fold them alike, shake them well together in the vase, and then *we*'ll draw to see who is to have him—for worse, as there is little chance of his becoming better.'

'*That* would be quite a proper mode of proceeding,' said Miss Stephens, still persisting in her resentment; 'only if I were to get him, I should not know what to do with my prize. It would be like winning an elephant or catching a Tartar—no, nothing half so civilised as a Tartar—but a lout who thinks it fun to make fools of poor simple inexperienced gi-gi-girls, who has no sense of ga-gallantry—' The sentence was finished with the aid of sobs and the unfurling of the embroidered pocket-handkerchief.

Howard Jones looked round to see if it were not possible to retreat into a cupboard, or to bolt up the chimney, or to take a harlequin's leap out of the window. But no cupboard was visible there, only shelves laden with china and other fragilities; the coals in the patent fireplace

blazed far too fiercely, and the hole by which the smoke escaped was much too small, to allow of his exit *that* way. As to the window, he well remembered that its height above the level of the gravel path was considerable. So he remained where he was, resigned to his fate, at the mercy of his fair tormentors. Perhaps, however, he was a little sustained by a glance of encouragement from Miss Touchwood's eyes.

'Don't take on so, dear,' said Laura to Sarah, who continued to ply her embroidered handkerchief. ''Tisn't likely you'll win him; six to one against you. No more shall I. I never did yet win the least thing at a raffle; there isn't therefore the slightest chance of my ever winning that great thing there. But you know, dear, though the lottery will be binding upon *him*, it need not be so upon us. If we don't like to follow it up, we can get out of it by referring to our pas and our mas.'

'True, Laura dear; I never thought of that. I won't give way to absolute despair. There *is* a means of escape out of the monster's clutches.' And the handkerchief found its way back at last into its natural hiding-place.

'Then you give the poor fellow no choice at all,' interposed tall Norah Longchamps, in a lachrymose tone. 'Perhaps in his heart he may have some little preference of his own.'

'Nonsense!' said Emma Touchwood sharply. 'How should a helpless creature like that have *any* heart, or *any* choice? Look at him; if he *had* any preference—and I begin to suspect that he *has* a preference'—(this was said with a stern glance at Norah and a much less severe look at the penitent young gentleman)—'if he did presume to have a preference under the circumstances, do you think that he would dare to express it?'

'I fear not,' responded Norah, with a sigh; 'but how some girls do carry all before them!'

'For your good, you silly maypole,' retorted Emma.

'What would you do with such a thing as that? You'd be a couple of grown-up Babes in the Wood with no need of any cruel uncle to stray you in the wilderness of this wicked world. You'd only want a robin redbreast to come and cover you up with leaves.'

'Never mind,' persisted Norah: 'it is very hard if he wishes to select—'

'Come, Miss Longchamps,' said Laura, laughing; 'the lots are ready; you see it's all fair. Here is the vase: and if you're afraid of dying an old maid, you have *your* chance of escape now, as well as the rest of us.'

'Shake them up well,' said Sarah Stephens: 'I tremble to think of the consequences.'

'I cannot help trembling too,' said little Laura, 'although I'm sure I scarcely know why.'

'Stop!' said Miss Touchwood, with a sudden outburst of self-devotion for the general good. 'Unless you wish it and insist upon it, ladies, we will not proceed further with this unpleasant business. I see a way of avoiding the painful trial. It will be best not to leave the result to chance. Some of you seem apprehensive of what *may* occur. Well, I am not; so *I* will relieve you of your fears. I sacrifice myself for your common welfare: *I* will marry Mr. Howard Jones!'

Poor Jones looked up like the negro (now historical) formerly painted on an emancipation banner, whom an emancipator, unfastening his fetters, bids 'Be free!' He clearly preferred having one dictatress to being at the mercy of half a dozen plagues.

'Dear me! dear me!' groaned Norah Longchamps. 'She takes him of her own accord, without giving anybody else a chance! What a girl! Without even asking his consent, or inquiring if he doesn't like some other girl better!'

Laura Leeson breathed a sigh of relief, as if her conscience were unburdened of a heavy responsibility. The

other girls giggled right merrily. Sarah's giggle only was not merry, suggesting rather that the handkerchief might once more be put in requisition.

'Allow me to explain the grounds of my resolve,' Emma Touchwood gaily continued. 'As we are alone, young ladies, I don't mind telling you that I have always determined, if ever I married, to wear the—the—the crown and sceptre. No hectoring, cow-killing husband for me; I should very soon put him in his place. Not that I should object to a hero like Hercules; neither should I want him to ply the distaff and the spindle; but he must acknowledge me as the ruling power. He may play the king as much as he pleases, provided that I am viceroy over him. I had rather be queen of the Cannibal Islands than housemaid to the brother of the Sun and the Moon. You see, then, young ladies, it would be turning my back on Providence to let slip such a chance as this; especially as, at the same time that it suits my purpose, it saves you all from having to take a painful step. Nay, some of you even, if I may believe my ears, would utterly refuse to take it.'

Miss Stephens looked up with an expression of countenance which was anything but affirmative; while Norah ventured to expostulate, 'You must not be quite so sure of that.'

'In respect to you, dear, I am not sure at all; but we'll make it up to you by and by. You shall have my elder brother, Sir Harry, if you like, after you have learned to spell. He's nearly as big a booby as Howard, and much better looking. You'll then be Lady Touchwood, while I shall be plain Mrs. Howard Jones—a good old Welsh name nevertheless. Jones, or John's (that is John's son or John's daughter), is quite as ancestral as the O' of the Irish or the Mac of the Scotch. Will *that* comfort you the least in the world?'

'Well, ye-es! It is better than—'

'Much better than nothing, you wisely think. It is better for you than Howard Jones would be; because *I* shall be there to take care of you both—of booby brother and maypole sister-in-law. For it is understood, dear, that in all ordinary matters you will pay us the compliment to consult *us*—Howard and me.'

'Of course,' said Norah, wiping her eyes. 'But are you *quite* sure that Mr. Jones will—will have you?'

'Mr. Howard Jones!' said the lady appealed to, in not an imperious but a decided tone of voice.

'Yes, Miss Touchwood,' said the gentleman, immediately answering to the call.

'Will you, Howard Jones, take me, Emma Touchwood, for your wedded wife?'

'Most certainly I will, with the greatest of pleasure.'

'Say simply "I will," if you please. It is more formal and business-like, though less polite.'

'I will,' was the obedient response.

'Will you, Howard Jones, serve, honour, and obey me, Emma Touchwood? Will you love and cherish me in sickness and in health, forsaking all other, until death us do part?'

'I will,' was again very cheerfully replied.

'Very good. Then I, Emma Touchwood, for my part, agree to take you, Howard Jones, for my wedded husband, to love me, and serve me, and cherish me, and the rest of it, until death us do part—I think that is what is called a bargain?'

'A sharp one,' whispered Sarah to her neighbour.

'Which I am ready to fulfil at the earliest opportunity. There's no occasion, Howard, to buy the ring. This, once my dear mother's, fits me exactly. I shall only want a pretty guard to keep it in its place, and—as a token of our engagement and a proof of your affection.'

Howard took her hand and kissed it—not the most

stupid or ungraceful thing he could do—and simply uttered the words, 'This very evening.'

'No, no! To-morrow will be time enough.'

'But haven't you another brother whom you can spare, dear Emma, for me?' the nameless young lady archly inquired. 'I hope you will not quite forget your old school-fellow and once your dearest friend.'

'Why, you know I have, Goody dear. There's my younger brother Tom, the very thing for you. *He's* not a booby, no more than I am myself. Mamma's property (you may have heard she was an heiress)was settled on the second son. Tom is fond of a country life—shooting, and fishing, and vineries, and melon-beds; and when once he gets on the magistrates' bench, he wouldn't change his little squiredom for an empire. Heigh, Goody dear! what do you say to that, if I can manage it?'

Goody said nothing, but blushed rosy red, and suddenly fell into deep reflection.

'*I* think Tom even better looking than Harry,' Emma continued, as coolly as if she were giving her opinion of an eligible residence or a becoming dress; 'and he is very nearly as well off in the world. Only you won't be Lady Touchwood, nor even (as your father isn't an earl) Lady Goody Touchwood. So you will have to make up your mind to *that* privation, my pretty sister, Mrs. Tom Touch-wood that is to be.'

'Fie, Emma, as if I cared for such things!'

'As titles? Not much, my dear; as a husband, perhaps a wee tiny *leetle*, and no crime committed either. But the fatigue and excitement we have undergone will make a little refreshment very acceptable. I requested it to be made beforehand. We have only to open the folding-doors.'

She motioned to Mr. Jones to do so, and then rose to lead the way to a table laden with a five-o'clock tea, be-sides displaying a large mince pie surrounded with seven minor pielets.

'There is a whole mince pie for each of us, to quiet our consciences, including Howard's; and there is the good substantial pie for the community to cut and come again. I am sure we have all of us fairly earned it. Have I not done right, Howard, in ordering this?' she asked her future husband, as calmly and quietly as if they had been married half a dozen years.

'I will,' replied the bewildered young gentleman, in whose head his late interrogatory was running. 'That is, I beg your pardon, you have done *quite* right, Miss Touchwood. It is exactly what I should have done myself if I had only had the sense to think of it.'

She rewarded him with an approving smile. 'When all is over and settled,' she added, addressing her friends, 'you will accept some better entertainment than this—at which I particularly wish to present to Miss Stephens a cousin of mine whom we are expecting from the Cape. He's only a captain, not very rich, and is getting old—he must be turned of thirty; but he's a capital fellow, nevertheless, and I know he would like to sell his commission and settle down. But we shall not be gone long; shall we, Howard? This is not the time of year for a very extended wedding-trip; is it, Howard? Besides, I don't want to lose the New Year's parties, and we shall have plenty of business upon our hands. We will try, however, to give you as good mince pies *after* Christmas as you have had before it. By the way, Howard, please cut up the large pie and hand it round.'

'I will, dear Emma; I will, I will!'

A few minutes afterwards a thundering knock at the door was speedily followed by loud laughter in the hall, and the sound of footsteps rushing upwards. It was young Sir Harry and his brother Tom Touchwood, followed by the three brothers Leeson. Then more knocks, preceded by the rumbling of wheels, filled the drawing-room with a party of smiling mammas.

'Glad to see you, ladies,' said Emma, still doing the honours; 'but it is finished now. There is no more mince pie. It is all done; *all.*'

'At least give us a cup of tea,' young Sir Harry said, 'and let us have a little dance over the crumbs.'

'Dat is better dan putting Mistere Jones *to debt.* I shall play,' said smiling Petitose, 'a pr-r-retty Mince-Pie Waltz for you all to dance to.'

LITTLE JACK HORNER SAT IN A CORNER.

CHRISTMAS IN THE STREETS.

SOME curious discoveries might be made by inquiring how Christmas comes to a great many people who are inevitably associated with it, and serve in some sort to enhance the festivities of others more fortunate than themselves. This season of jollity and social reunion, about which so much has been justly said and sung, may, apart from its sacred origin, be but unequally enjoyed by a great many people, who have personally little to do with 'festive boards' and 'rosy wine,' and the 'grasp of friendship's hand.' Unless they share Mark Tapley's ambition to be jolly under difficulties, Christmas must be but a wearisome time of year, requiring no little philanthropy to make its jubilance significant of the universal comfort popularly supposed to be represented by bright fires, a snugly curtained room, much feeding, strong drinks cunningly commingled with spice and sugar, a round of stories, and a song with a 'chirping' chorus. Who, in that occasional silent interval which will sometimes come, even to the most jovial party, has not listened to the clamping of a pair of heavy boots out in the deserted street, and felt—not a glow, but a chill of sympathy for the solitary sentinel who stands under the lamp-post, beating his hands upon his mist-bedewed chest, and gazing wistfully at the ruddy glow of light from neighbouring windows, whence comes the clinking of glasses and the sound of boisterous merriment?

'We shall have some severe weather yet, I fancy,' says the sympathetic listener, with an affected shiver, as he

hitches his chair a trifle closer to the fire. 'It looked like snow this morning, and I shouldn't wonder if it comes down yet.'

'Well, we had a touch or two of regular old-fashioned Christmas frost last year,' says the man in the corner, who rubs his hands briskly at the recollection; 'a regular fine blood-stirring sort of night it was when we all met at Rumbelow's—you remember it, of course. Glorious fire he had, hadn't he?—much such a fire as this,' correcting himself in time to avoid an implied disparagement.

'We'll have another log,' says the host. 'Come, fill up, somebody; you remember the old song—

> "Gaffer Winter may seize on the milk in the pail,
> 'Twill be long ere he freeze the bold brandy and ale."'

'Ah, that was a hard night!' returns speaker No. 1, still impressed with the sound of those solitary boots. 'Policeman frozen to death on his beat, I understood from the newspapers.'

'Serve him right for quarrelling with the cook,' says the facetious man, and the receding footsteps are lost amidst the general laughter.

Serene, philosophical, and benevolent consideration—stoical, and yet crabbed, cynicism—or captious antagonism, to at least one-half of his race, are the three conditions which are alone possible to the constabulary mind, from the night of December the 24th to that of January the 6th, both inclusive. Let any man of an ordinarily even temper ask himself what would be his own opinion of the conduct of the three 'belated revellers' who, coming full of strong fluids and the recollections of protracted conviviality, should take up the whole width of the pavement, in the vain endeavour to march in time to an unsteady fugue, meant to represent a chorus, and, in selfish ignorance of his long and cheerless vigil, greet him with small personal witticisms. Would he mildly remark, that 'they've been

a-keeping of it up,' and smilingly remonstrate upon the lateness of the hour; would he bid them begone for a 'pack of fools;' or, finally, would he not rather, feeling that 'Gaffer Winter' had seized upon the milk of human kindness, threaten to 'lock them up,' and wish, in ruthless indignation, that he could lock up everybody? Even the more regular householder, who deprecates such 'orgies' as lead to a disturbance in his quiet neighbourhood in the dead of night, looks through his bedroom window, beneath the blind, and watches for the policeman coming round the square. Moderate potations, a cheerful fire, and the recollections of a pleasant evening, are not thus to be rudely broken by low bacchanalian merriment. He must inquire into it in the morning; as it is, he'll keep awake to hear the waits play in the holy Christmas-tide.

None of us do keep awake; the street minstrels, more faithful to their trust, congregate at the corner, and amidst much wheezing and the stamping of snow from their shoes, take the rusty green-baize covers from their instruments. It needs a hearty Christmas effort to get the cold air out of the throat of the trombone, and 'the harp which once in Tara's halls the soul of music shed' evidently wishes it had stayed there.

The policeman, meantime, stands grimly critical, like an embodied public who has read something in the *Times*, but feels a bond of union established between himself and the performers nevertheless,—nay, nods approvingly as they ask him whether he'd like 'Poor Mary Ann,' as a cheerful and appropriate concession to his musical knowledge.

The sleeper hearing the uncertain melody, modified by curtain and blanket and the sleep of happy plenitude, dreams of distant cathedral choirs,—of songs carolled by voyagers on the decks of vessels far out at sea,—of the old school dinners, to summon him to which the gong beats tunefully amidst a chorus of boyish voices. Waking, he

by GEORGE H. THOMAS]

A POLICEMAN'S VIEW OF CHRISTMAS.

hears the appeal which the spokesman of the waits makes to Christmas charity, somewhat broken and unintelligible it may be, but how would you yourself speak after blowing for an hour down a frozen trumpet?—

> 'Good-morn'n, ladies and gen-el-men all,
> The Oridg-nal waits do on you call;
> Wishin' you merry Chrism's here,
> An' hope you'll enjie the enshooin' year.'

Let us hope as the hospitable door of the quiet tavern opens, and swallows the minstrel band in a subdued blaze of gaslight, that they are going to a supper such as they dearly love,—of warm 'pettitoes,' or some cheap luxury which will give them cheer; let us hope, too, that the constable, whose solid gravity relaxes as he receives outside the door the fragrant draught, compounded—well, never mind, call it warm ale—feels a seasonable sentiment as he slowly turns the pewter pot to mix the spice and sugar, and with a kindly grin wishes everybody a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

MUMMERS AND DROLLS.

A GOSSIP ABOUT PANTOMIMES OLD AND NEW.

I WONDER when man first discovered that he was endowed with the faculty of humour, who was the first person to laugh, and what first caused laughter? It is most likely that our first parents wept; but did they ever laugh? I don't know that any one has ever attempted to investigate this subject, and I have no data to found any theory upon. I must, therefore, stop short at the very suggestion of the inquiry, and come to the ascertained fact that the amusing of people as a profession, or calling, was first

tory, and we hear little more about them until the fifteenth century, when a fantastic personage in a particoloured dress appears in the Italian tragedies. His name was Punchello; and his business was to play tricks upon heroic folks, parody their speeches, and make jest of their actions. We have no record of a Harlequin in the Roman period, though pantomimical performances were common in the reigns of Nero and Augustus. In these pieces the performers told a story, such as the 'Loves of Mars and Venus,' by dumb-show; but there was no character corresponding either to the Harlequin of Italian comedy or to his Grecian prototype. In the reign of Augustus the three great pantomimists were Bathyllus, Pylades, and Hylas, and the character of their performances may be gathered from the record of a contest in which Pylades and Hylas essayed to represent by dumb-show the character of Agamemnon. In trying to represent Agamemnon as a great man, Hylas stood up on his tiptoes. 'That,' said Pylades, 'is being tall, not great.' Being called upon to give his own rendering of the character, Pylades threw himself into an attitude of meditation, thus giving an idea of the first characteristic of a great man. The actors in these pantomimes or *Fabulæ Atillanæ*, as they were called, from the name of the town (Atilla) where they were first introduced, wore masks and high-heeled shoes furnished with brass or iron heels, which jingled as they danced. Some of them (*Funambuli*) were performers on the tight rope, *à la* Blondin, and on the trapeze (*petaurum*), *à la* Leotard.

But we must take a leap into the fifteenth century to find Harlequin assuming the characteristics which are now commonly associated with the name. Finding him here, we lose him no more. From this period the history of the Harlequin family has been written with such scrupulous care, and guarded so faithfully, that we can trace back the genealogy of any modern scion of the house

to his mediæval progenitors without missing a single link.

All the mimes, mummers, drolls, and caper-cutters of which we have any knowledge derive their origin from the Satyr or Harlequin of the Greeks. Clowns, Pantaloons, Columbines, Punches, Scaramouches, &c., *ad infinitum*, are but varieties of the same species, called into existence at various times and in various countries. Harlequin was the father of them all. There are many versions of the origin of the name. The French performers of the sixteenth century pretended that the name originated from Harlequin having been the *protégé* of the first president of the parliament, Achille de Harlay, and that he was, in consequence, called Harlequina, the little *protégé* of Harlay. The name Arlecchino, however, was applied to the character in Italy long before this. According to the Italian theory, the word is derived from 'harle,' the name of a river bird, which had particoloured feathers and flew about in an irregular and fantastic manner. Remembering, however, the Greek satyr, with his tiger-skin dress, it is not unreasonable to connect the word with 'Hercules,' who, as the students of Aristophanes are aware, figured in the Greek comedies as a buffoon. No doubt Harlequin took his characteristics from the patron of his tribe, Mercury.

The history of the origin of pantomime in Italy is a well-worn story, and I need only refer to it in a few words before passing to the glorious development of the entertainment in France.

The satire of Punchello was at first directed against persons and things indiscriminately; but in process of time the fun arose out of the comic types afforded by the inhabitants of the various provinces of Italy. The Venetians, the Neapolitans, the Bolognese, and the people of Bergamo had all distinct characteristics, and it was to satirise these local peculiarities that the characters of Italian comedy were in-

vented. The original characters were Pantalone, a Venetian merchant; Dottoré, a Bolognese physician; Spaviento, a Neapolitan braggart; Pullicenella, a wag of Apulia; Giangurgolo and Coviello, two clowns of Calabria; Gelosommo, a Roman beau; Bellamo, a Milanese simpleton; Brighella, a Ferrarese pimp; and Arlecchino, a blundering servant

LA BALLERINA (1500). COVIELLO (1550).

of Bergamo. The principal and most active of this set was Arlecchino, and in process of time all the rest became his butts. His original character is thus described: 'He is a mixture of ignorance, simplicity, wit, stupidity, and grace. He is a half made-up man, a great child with gleams of reason and intelligence, and all his mistakes

and blunders have something arch about them. The true mode of representing him is to give him suppleness, agility, the playfulness of a kitten, with a certain coarseness of exterior which renders his actions more absurd. His part is that of a faithful valet, greedy, always in love, always in trouble, either on his master's account or his own, afflicted and consoled as easily as a child, and whose grief is as amusing as his joy.' In France the character became completely transformed. He became witty, cunning, a punster, and a bit of a philosopher; and his costume was as much metamorphosed as his character. When he first appeared in France his costume was composed of a jacket fastened in front by ugly ribbons, loose pantaloons covered with patches of various coloured cloths sewn on anyhow; he had a straight black beard, wore a half black mask, and carried a wooden sword in a belt of untanned leather. In the course of a few years, however, the dress was made of a finer material, and the pieces of particoloured cloth were arranged more tastefully. These changes in the dress and character were introduced by Joseph Dominique Biancolelli, the father of the race of Harlequins which began to flourish in France about the time of our Merry Monarch. Dominique came to Paris in 1660, on the invitation of Cardinal Mazarin; so that the introduction of the Italian pantomime into France is due to the clergy. When Dominique first appeared in Paris he played second to Locatelli, who then performed the part of Trivelin, a species of Harlequin; but at the death of the latter, in 1671, he had the field entirely to himself, and soon acquired the reputation of being the greatest actor of his age. He died in 1688, aged forty-eight, from inflammation of the lungs, caused by a severe cold which he caught in dancing before Louis XV. His companions closed the theatre for a month, as a mark of their grief. The youngest of his children, Pierre, followed in his father's footsteps, and played under the name of Dominique.

In 1689 the part of Harlequin was taken up by Gherardi, a Tuscan, who made his *début* in a song called the 'Divorce,' which had been popularised by Dominique. Gherardi made a great hit as a singer, but failed as a pantomimist. He died in 1700, from the effects of a fall on the stage.

In 1716 the famous Thomassin made his appearance as Harlequin, and acted with great success in pieces written for him by Marivaux, such as *La Surprise de l'Amour*, *Le Prince Travesti*, &c. Thomassin added to the part of Harlequin many tricks of extraordinary agility; but many of these were so dangerous, that the public, fearing to lose their favourite mime, persuaded him to discontinue them. Thomassin was an excellent actor—true, naïve, original, and pathetic, with much natural gaiety and humour. Like Dominique, he had many imitators; but they were all miserable failures until the appearance of Carlin.

In the year 1741, Carlo Bertinazzi, commonly called Carlin, made his *début* as Harlequin with triumphant success. His impersonation of the character was distinguished by a perfectly natural comic humour. Garrick seeing him in a piece in which he had just received chastisement from his master (threatening the latter with one hand, and rubbing his back with the other), was charmed with his acting, and exclaimed, 'See, even the back of Carlin wears the same expression as his face!' 'Carlin,' says M. Sand, 'like most clever buffoons, had a very melancholy disposition, and as with Dominique, his gaiety was what the English term humour. It belonged to his mind and not to his temperament.' There is an anecdote told of Dominique—and, if I mistake not, it has been told of Joe Grimaldi—that being greatly affected with spleen, he consulted Dermoulin, a celebrated physician, who advised him to go and see Dominique, as he made everybody laugh. 'Alas!' replied the actor, 'I am Dominique,

so I may consider myself a lost man.' To his theatrical talents Carlin joined all the qualities of an honest man, and he was possessed of great information. He wrote a book called *Les Metamorphoses d'Arlequin.* Carlin died in 1783, and was succeeded in the favour of the public by Golinetti.

The character of Harlequin has undergone as many variations in the type as in the orthography. Thus Harlequino became Arlichino, and then Arlecchino. The character is now little in fashion in Italy, where it first arose, having been replaced by Mineghino and Henterello. There were many varieties of the Harlequin, the most notable being Trivelin and Truffaldin. The former was, under a different name and dress, the same species of Harlequin which Dominique so much improved upon. His dress, instead of the lozenges symmetrically arranged, had triangular patches along the seams only, and suns and moons for patches. He wore the soft hat and hare's tail, but did not carry the wooden sword.

Truffaldin is a species of Harlequin, which first made its appearance about 1530. He represented a cunning lying valet, under the name of *truffa* (the villain). It became very popular in Italy, and towards the middle of the seventeenth century was an established type of Harlequin.

It is not difficult to recognise, even in the pantomime of the present day, the first principles and elements, so to speak, of the comedy of life and manners. In Pantaloon we have the obdurate father or uncle; in Columbine, the daughter or niece; in Harlequin, the handsome dashing lover; and in Clown, the lying servant of Harlequin. But there were many other characters which have no corresponding representative in modern pantomime, though they were originals of well-known personages in comedy. Among these were the Captain, a great braggart and swaggerer, such as Dame Quickly had a horror of; the

Doctor, an old fogy; the Apothecary, a lean miserable creature, with a red nose (with whom Shakespeare was acquainted); and a female character corresponding to the French *soubrette* and the English chambermaid, who did for her mistress, the Columbine, what the Clown did for his master, the Harlequin; that is to say, told lies, carried

PANTALONE (1550). HARLEQUINO (1570).

messages, delivered notes on the sly, and beguiled the old gentleman. Let us review these drolls in the order of their importance.

First, then, *Pantaloon*. This character is one of the four principal maskers in the Italian 'commedia dell' arte.' In Venice, four of these characters appeared in every

piece: the Tartaglia (stammerer), Truffaldino (caricaturist), Brighella (representative of orators and other popular characters), and Pantaloon (the Venetian citizen). The name of the last character is derived from 'pianta leone' (*plante lion*). The ancient merchants of Venice, in their zeal to annex all they could to the republic, set up every now and then about the isles of the Mediterranean the lion of St. Mark, and because they boasted of their conquests, the people nicknamed them 'plant lion.' According to another account, the name is derived from San Pantaleone, the ancient patron of Venice.

Pantaloon took all characters; sometimes those of father, husband, uncle, widower, &c. He was sometimes rich, sometimes poor; at others, miserly, and frequently prodigal. The dress of Pantaloon has been considerably altered in modern times; originally he wore tight drawers, generally red, a long flowing coat, and a little skull-cap. When the republic of Venice lost the kingdom of Negropont, mourning was worn throughout the state; Pantaloon, as a good citizen, adopted it with the rest, and has worn it ever since. Possibly they were not aware of it, but the Pantaloons last season at Drury-lane and Covent Garden were in mourning for the dismemberment of the ancient republic of Venice.

In Italy, about 1750, Darbes was one of the best Pantaloons. He once played the part of Pantaloon in one of Goldoni's comedies. The character being a serious one, he played without a mask, and failed. Goldoni wrote him another piece, and he again assumed the traditional mask. The character made a great hit, and Darbes never afterwards ventured to appear without the mask.

The Doctor, Cassandre, Facanappa, and several others, were varieties of this character. The Doctor was first brought on the stage in 1560. He was sometimes a learned man, sometimes a lawyer, but rarely a physician. From 1560 to the middle of the seventeenth century he was

always dressed in black from head to foot, in the professor's robe, wearing underneath a short black tunic and black stockings. He also wore a black mask covering the forehead and nose. In the troupe called 'Gelosi,' which came to France in 1572, the part of Doctor was filled by Lucio Burchiella, an actor of great merit. 'Le Docteur' was played in 1653 by Angelo Lolli, of Bologna. His companions called him the 'angel,' probably on account of his name. He does not appear, however, to have been very angelic in temper, for he quarrelled with Turi, the Pantaloon, and fought him in a duel. Possibly Turi was jealous of the innovation, and thought there should be only one Pantaloon in the piece.

Cassandre was introduced in the troupe of the 'Gelosi' in 1580. He took the part of serious fathers ('heavy fathers,' as we call them in modern theatrical parlance), jealous husbands, &c. The most celebrated French Cassandre was Chappelle, whose credulity and *naïveté* were proverbial. He was short, and fat; his eyes, continually opening and shutting, were surmounted by a thick black eyebrow; his mouth, always open, gave him a stupid appearance; and his legs resembled those of an elephant.

Facanappa, though in some respects resembling Pantaloon, possessed one of the attributes of our modern Harlequin. He introduced unexpected changes during the representation of the piece, and at the end of the play announced the performances for the following evening. He had the privilege of making various allusions, employing in his Venetian dialect the most popular slang terms, and coining new ones if necessary. He had a long parrot-shaped nose, surmounted by a pair of green spectacles, and wore a flat hat with a broad brim, a waistcoat covered with tinsel, and a long white coat with large pockets. The Baron is another variety. Palermo formerly possessed a national theatre like Naples, but of a totally different character; thus 'Il Barone,' the father of the family, a

Sicilian lord, the dupe of his valets, deceived by his daughter, was the personification of the nobility of the country, and of the body of citizens aiming at distinction. 'Il Barone' still figures in the marionette pieces in Sicily.

We come next to the heroine of the comedy, the *Columbine*. There were originally many types of this character.

IL CAPITAN (1668).

COLOMBINE (1683).

From the flattering and corrupt slave of the Roman period there arose on the Italian stage the *servetta*, or *fantesca*, confidential servant, called later in France *soubrette*. In 1528 we find these women playing at the Padua theatre. In 1530, the servants in the troupe of *Intronati* bore the names of Colombina, Oliva, Fianetta, Pasquella, Nespola.

Colombina was sometimes mistress and sometimes maid. The most famous representatives of the character in France were Thérèse, Catherine, and the second Thérèse Biancolelli, grandmother, granddaughter, and great-granddaughter, a generation of Columbines. The most remarkable for her varied talents and numerous creations was

PULCINELLA (1685). SCAPINO (1716).

Catherine, daughter of the celebrated Dominique. She was sometimes mistress, sometimes soubrette, avocat, danseuse, singer, &c., all of which she played equally well. She spoke several languages, dialects, and jargons, and was exceedingly pretty and graceful. She made her *début* in 1683, in *Arlequin Protée*, with great success. It was at

the theatre of the Comédie Italienne that Columbine first took the dress of Arlequine in *Le Retour de la Foire de Besons* in 1695. As that costume was very much liked, Columbine came to be dressed in a particoloured gown, like a female Harlequin. The airy being in short muslin petticoats is a creation of very modern date. In the French comedies Columbine was often Harlequin's wife; but she was never a fairy with power to effect transformations. The Ballerina, sketched by our artist, was a dancing girl first introduced on the French stage.

The Clowns of the Italian comedy were named Bertoldo, Pagliaccio, Gros-Guillaume, Pedrolino, Gilles, Coviello, and Peppe Nappa. In France these eventually become Pierrot in all his varieties. In the sixteenth century, at Bologna, there lived an improvisatore named Giulio-Cesare Croce, who sang in public places, accompanying himself on a stringed instrument, the history of a fictitious person named Bartoldo (possibly a Billy Barlow of the period), which was so popular that his songs were printed.

This person's talent for improvisation gained for him so great a reputation that the cavalieri of Bologna gave him a pension in his old age. The popularity of the characters of whom Croce (Della Lira) sang soon caused them to be embodied on the stage, and at the end of the sixteenth century Bertoldo, Bertoldino, and the others, were commonly represented in the Italian theatres.

Pagliaccio, one of the first of this type, made his appearance in 1570. The name (literally *paille hachée*), which has become synonymous with *étourdi* (blunderer), is a corruption of *bajaccio*, a stupid wit. Pagliaccio is thus described by Salvator Rosa: 'He is clothed in a loose puckered dress, fastened by enormous buttons, a white flexible hat, wears a mask, and is smothered in flour.'

Gros-Guillaume appeared at the end of the sixteenth century. He was a great eater, fat beyond measure, and wore two waistbands, one above and the other below the

stomach. He also was dressed in white, and floured his face. A famous representative of the part was Robert Guérin, called 'La Fleur,' a great favourite with Henri IV. and Richelieu, who frequently invited him to their palaces.

Pedrolino was an honest faithful Clown, whose business was to watch the wife of his master when the latter was asleep or away from home. He wore a long white smock and a straw hat, and carried a large stick. He was, in fact, the Italian peasant. Pierrot originally was the French peasant. The character, however, was completely changed by Debureau, a celebrated representative of the part. He made Pierrot sometimes good and generous by fits and starts, sometimes a thief, a miser, and a coward. If ever he became rich, his natural faults soon made him poor again. Debureau not only changed the morals of this character, but also the physical powers and the dress. The short woollen jacket, with large buttons and tight sleeves reaching to the wrists, became a loose blouse of calico, with large and long sleeves covering the hands; and instead of the white nightcap and the pointed hat he wore a black-velvet cap to heighten the whiteness of his face. The proper name of the character is Pagliaccio, though the French call it Pierrot.

The son of Debureau played the same part as his father, in 1847, and was said to be the best-looking and most elegant Pierrot that ever existed.

Paul Legrand, who formerly played comic parts in the vaudevilles, and that of Léandre in the pantomimes, came out as Pierrot in 1845. He was greatly praised by the French critics in this strain: 'His resources were extensive; he had a fine characteristic expression, a comic and fanciful invention, and particularly distinguished himself by his great power of pathos. Like Thomassin, he makes one laugh and weep at the same time.' We in England are unable to fathom the idea of weeping at the acting of a Clown. Indeed, Legrand, as some of my readers may

remember, played for a time at the Adelphi, in 1847-8, and did not succeed in evoking even laughter. His French admirers were very indignant, and said that the English public, being accustomed to the exaggerated fun of their Clowns, could not appreciate the delicate expression and refined wit of the French Pierrot.

PAGLIACCIO (1600). SCARAMUCCIA (1645).

The French view of the English Clown is interesting: 'The English Clown (whose nearest representative on the French stage is Pierrot) is an odd fantastical being. The Florentine Stentorella alone resembles him in his jests and tricks. His strange dress seems to have been taken from the American Indians. It consists of a white, red, yellow,

and green network, ornamented with diamond-shaped pieces of stuff of various colours. His face is floured and streaked with paint a deep carmine; the forehead is prolonged to the top of the head, which is covered with a red wig, from the centre of which a little stiff tail points to the sky. His manners are no less singular than his costume. He is not dumb, like our Pierrot; but on the contrary he sustains an animated and witty conversation; he is also an acrobat, and very expert in feats of strength.'

M. Blandelaire gives a more poetical description: 'The English Pierrot is not a person pale as the moon, mysterious as silence, straight and long like the gallows, to whom we have been accustomed in Debureau. The English Pierrot enters like the tempest, tumbles like a parcel; his laugh resembles joyous thunder. He is short and fat; his face is floured and streaked with paint; he has a great patch of red on each cheek; his mouth is enlarged by a prolongation of the lips by means of two red bands, so that when he laughs his mouth appears to open from ear to ear.'

Nevertheless, the English Clown came direct from France. Our own Joe Grimaldi studied under his father, who was a French Pierrot. Joe's grandfather played similar parts in Italy, where he was born. It was about 1704 that Joe's grandfather appeared in Paris. He was called Grimaldi *Jambe-de-Fer* (iron-legged), because, when playing one evening before the Turkish ambassador, he sprang so high as to touch the crystal lustres over his head, and one of the drops, being thus detached, fell upon the nose of the ambassador, who, in a great rage, complained to the minister, demanding that the pantomimist should be punished. Grimaldi, however, was only condemned to make a public apology.

But before proceeding to notice the peculiarities of the English drolls, let us glance at one more of the prominent

characters of the Italian comedy and the French pantomimes—the Captain.

The Captain, in his original form, wore a leopard's moustache, a starched ruff, a felt hat and plume, immense boots, and a long sword. It is said that he was originally a character peculiar to the comedy of Spain. At any rate, he has been known from a very early period; and though he has changed his dress with every age, his character has always remained the same. He has always been a great braggadocio, and so great a liar as sometimes to impose upon himself. The first Italian Captains date from the fifteenth century. In the sixteenth century the character was introduced into France, and a century later into Germany. In the Italian company which visited France in 1577, the part of Captain was played, under the name of Spavento, by Francesco Andreini. He played on several musical instruments, and bragged and lied in no less than six languages, including Greek and Turkish. There were many varieties of the Captain: Crocodillo, Spezzafer, Giangurgolo, Il Nappo, and Rogantino. Spezzafer wore the costume of the seigneurs of the court of Henri IV. —a slouched hat, a plume, a moustache and beard, a woman's collar, and a large sword. His great representative was Giuseppe Bianchi, who 'flourished' about the middle of the seventeenth century. Giangurgolo was the Calabrian type of Captain. He was passionately fond of the women; but at the same time always afraid to meddle with them, lest a lover or brother should arrive and give him a drubbing. He was a boaster, a liar, and a coward, and a glutton into the bargain. Il Nappo was the Neapolitan type, and represented the bravo; a great quarreller, but a great coward when it came to a fight. Rogantino was the Roman type, satirising the police and civic officers, a prototype of Dogberry and Verges. He was fond of showing his authority, and often arrested innocent people

when the real culprit escaped—on the principle of making some one suffer.

The varieties of these and the other prominent characters of the old comedies are almost innumerable, and yet most of them seem to have been well established, owing, no doubt, to the excellence of the actors. Their Italian representatives met with great favour in France: many of them were received at court and by the great dignitaries of the church. War or political differences never in any way interfered with the homage paid to these artists. They could presume and take a liberty when a foreign ambassador could not. This was illustrated in America, where James Wallack the actor, a great favourite of the American people, was the only person, except Lord Lyons, who dared to hoist over his house the Union Jack.

A story of the Italian Clown, Angelo Constantini, shows the very close intimacy which subsisted between princes and pantomimists in the old days to which I have been alluding. After the breaking up of the famous troupe of the Gelosi, Angelo Constantini went to Germany to find employment, and was patronised by Augustus I., King of Poland. For some time he played in comedy and sang in opera alternately, and so pleased the king that he was ennobled and appointed to a post in the royal household. Almost immediately he ventured to make love to the king's mistress, declared his passion for her, and endeavoured to poison her mind against the king. Incensed at his insolence, the lady informed the king, who hid himself in the room when Constantini was expected. Augustus disclosed himself sabre in hand, and threatened to cut off the audacious actor's head; but cooling down a little, had him arrested and conveyed to the castle of Königstein, where he remained a prisoner twenty years. At length, however, he was released through the intercession of another lady-favourite of the king, and all his property was restored to him.

Harlequin was first introduced upon the English stage, in 1717, by Mr. Rich, the manager of Covent Garden, in a piece called the *Sorcerer*. The entertainment was quite a novelty at the time. It was described as a species of dramatic composition, consisting of two parts, one serious and the other comic. Between the acts of the serious part of the story there was interwoven a comic fable, consisting chiefly of the courtship of Harlequin and Columbine, with a variety of surprising adventures and tricks, which were produced by the magic wand of Harlequin, such as the sudden transformation of palaces and temples to huts and cottages; of men and women into wheelbarrows and joint stools; colonnades to beds of tulips, and mechanics' shops into serpents and ostriches. This magic power was not an attribute of Harlequin before this period. It seems to have been the invention of Mr. Rich, suggested probably by the stage business necessary to the *Sorcerer*. The Harlequin of Rich was, to a great extent, a copy of the Italian. He still preserved his proper place as the hero of the story, and he acted only in dumb-show. The wits and critics, not being aware that it was proper for Harlequin to be silent, accused Rich of closing his mouth because he himself (being the representative) could not speak a sentence of English grammatically. Rich's education had been grossly neglected, and his language was very coarse and vulgar. He was in the habit of calling every one 'Mister,' as, for example: 'Well, Mister, how are you?' 'I say, you Mister, look here.' On one occasion Foote, being very much irritated by this, asked the manager why he did not call him by his name. 'Don't be angry,' said Rich, 'for I sometimes forget my own name.' 'I know that you can't write your own name,' said Foote, in reply, 'but I wonder you should forget it.'

The theory of the pantomime, as invented and adapted by Rich, was this: Harlequin was the lover of Columbine;

Pantaloon was her father; and the Clown was a blundering servant of Harlequin. The harlequinade represented the courtship of Harlequin and Columbine, whose course of true love was constantly arrested and diverted by the interference of her old father, the Pantaloon. The pan-

GRIMALDI'S 'BOLD DRAGOON,' IN THE PANTOMIME OF THE 'RED DWARF.'

tomime, when it became a separate and distinct piece, generally opened with the abduction of Columbine from Pantaloon's house. Pantaloon discovered his loss and followed in pursuit, and when overtaken, Harlequin used his magic bat to play tricks upon the old man and defeat

his paternal intentions. In this the Clown was the assistant and servant of Harlequin, and his function was to delude and beguile the Pantaloon while Harlequin was courting his daughter. Afterwards Clown became the servant of Pantaloon, bribed by Harlequin to favour his courtship by deceiving his master. In the course of their adventures, Columbine was often rescued by her father and taken back home, but was always carried back again by her lover, with whom she is at last made happy with the old man's consent. The bat or wooden sword was supposed to have the power of changing copper into gold, cutting people in half, and enabling Harlequin to jump through stone walls and vault over the tops of houses. The four colours of his dress had a special meaning. The yellow indicated jealousy; the blue, truth; the scarlet, love; and the black, invisibility. Rich—the famous 'Lun,' as he was called—dressed for Harlequin in a loose jacket and trousers. The present style of dress was introduced by Byrne some years afterwards. It consisted, as then made, of a white-silk shape fitting without a wrinkle, into which variegate patches were sewn, the whole being profusely covered with spangles. The innovation was accepted with great applause. With the assumption of the new dress, Harlequin lost much of his importance. This was owing to two circumstances: first, the fact that the part had fallen into the hands of a ballet-master, whose genius lay chiefly in his legs; and secondly, to the appearance at this time of Grimaldi in the character of Clown. In Grimaldi's hands Clown became the great mirth-maker of the piece, and the extraordinary talent of the actor gave it a patent of preëminence for the future. Grimaldi's dress was different from that now in vogue. He 'made up' to represent a lubberly loutish boy—a clown, in fact, as the character ought to be. His trousers, large and baggy, and well defined in the posterior quarter by the aid of stuffing, were buttoned on to his jacket, and

round his neck he wore a schoolboy's frill—a part of the dress borrowed directly from the Spanish Captain and the French Pierrot. He did not chalk and paint his face in the elaborate manner now adopted (and which makes all our modern Clowns look exactly alike), but put on some patches of red, so as to give the notion of a greedy boy who had smeared himself with jam in robbing a cupboard. Grimaldi produced all his effects by the genuine humour of his acting, by the comic faces which he drew, by the grotesqueness of his pantomimic action, by the *naïveté* of his blunders, and by the humour of all his practical jokes. He did not, like the Clowns of the present day, call in the aid of acrobatism, and dance upon stilts, walk upon barrels, or play the fiddle behind his back; nor did he seek to gain the applause of his audience by astonishing leaps and feats of strength. He trusted all to the force of his natural humour; and such was his power that he made the success of pieces which were utterly wanting in even the commonest accessories of a spectacle. We have all heard of the famous pantomime of *Mother Goose*, but this pantomime was only famous on account of Grimaldi's acting. It was a very poor piece, and nothing was done for it by the management. Grimaldi was possessed of infinite resource. He could transform himself with anything that came to hand—with a bunch of carrots or turnips, a saucepan, a pillow, a lady's muff, or a tablecloth. Many of these wonderful transformations he effected on the spur of the moment with stage properties which fell in his way by accident. He refers to one of his favourite drolleries in his rhyming adieu to the stage:

'Ne'er shall I build the wondrous verdant man,
Tall, turnip-headed, carrot-fingered, lean;
Ne'er shall I, on the very newest plan,
Cabbage a body—old Joe Frankenstein,
Nor make a fire, nor eke compose a coach
Of saucepans, trumpets, cheese, and such sweet fare.
Sorrow hath ta'en my number—I encroach
No more upon the chariot, but the chair.'

There is no need to dwell upon the well-known career of Joe Grimaldi; but it may be interesting to fix the fact, that the pantomime as we now know it was first introduced in his time, and mainly by his efforts. Joe's father, Signor Grimaldi, was originally a Pierrot, and the pieces he played in were ballets rather than pantomimes. The most popular performers in these entertainments at this period were foreigners. Two of old Grimaldi's pupils were M. Mercerot and M. Laurent, described in the bills of Philip Astley's theatre, then called 'The Amphitheatre of Arts,' as 'Performers of action, Pierrots, and buffo dancers.'

The dress, manner, and habits of the Clown as we now know him are all derived from Joe Grimaldi. He it was who first introduced the song of 'Hot Codlins,' in the pantomime of the *Talking Bird*, first played on the 12th April 1819. The following is an extract from the bill: 'Clown, Mr. Grimaldi, with a new song, "Hot Codlins," composed by Mr. Whitaker; Columbine, Miss Tree.' Among the most celebrated mummers and drolls of Grimaldi's time may be mentioned, besides Joe himself, Bradbury, Clown; Bologna, Harlequin; and Barnes, Pantaloon.

The old boys among us are fond of saying that there are no Clowns nowadays—'You should have seen Joe Grimaldi, sir!'—just as they are fond of saying there are no tragedians—'You should have seen Kean, sir!' It is natural that they should have a favourable recollection of the actors they saw in the days of their youth and freshness; but there is little just occasion to depreciate the merits either of our tragedians or our clowns. With regard to the latter, it must be remembered that the scope of the character has, in recent times, been much circumscribed by the introduction of many mechanical and scenic effects which were not known in Grimaldi's time.

The present generation is acquainted with a class of mummers and drolls which did not exist a quarter of a century ago. This class includes nigger serenaders, and the so-called comic singers at the music-halls. The niggers, relying to a great extent upon music of a popular and

GRIMALDI'S SET-TO IN THE PANTOMIME OF 'HARLEQUIN AND ASMODEUS.'

catching kind, are universally popular; and their grotesque antics are often exceedingly amusing. Poor Pierce, of 'Hoop-de-doo-dem-doo' celebrity, at a time when the market was not so fully stocked with talent, might have attained a fame equal to that of Joe Grimaldi. His humour was

of the true stamp—rich and unctuous. Mackney's humour and many accomplishments as a musician and dancer entitle him to a high place as a professional droll. Unsworth, too, possessed an original genius. Of the 'general run' of comic singers at the music-halls the less said the better. They cannot sing; they are vulgar, ignorant, and offensive; and their songs are gross and indecent, without one redeeming touch of wit or humour. When the theatrical monopoly—that last dirty rag of protection—has been broken up, and any one will be at liberty to act plays where he chooses, under the ordinary regulations for the preservation of public order, these blatant fellows will be sent back to their proper occupation, the sweeping out of shops and the scouring of pewter pots; and the humbler classes of the public will be supplied with an entertainment calculated both to afford them amusement and elevate their tastes.

THE GHOST OF LAWFORD HALL.

A True Story.

BY WALTER THORNBURY.

[Every word of the following story, taken down by me from the lips of a lady in Warwickshire, may be relied upon as entirely true, without any addition from my pen.—W. T.]

It is now very many years ago that I and my husband, not long after our marriage, went on a visit to Lawford Hall, an old house near Rugby, which I had long desired to see. I remember I posted alone from Coventry, near which town we had been staying, as my husband had gone on two days before to attend some county races, where the Lawfords were running a favourite horse, and to go hunting the next day with the old baronet. At the last Warwickshire house in which we had been staying I had picked up one wet day, in the library, an old book of trials which contained allusions to Lawford Hall. For three hours in a cosy nook of that old Elizabethan room—where Vandyke's cavaliers seemed longing to come out of their frames to talk to you—I sat absorbed over a strange and terrible poisoning case, which had made all Warwickshire shudder sixty years before. There are days when the brain seems unusually sensitive to impressions; and all the details of this crime, from some reason or another, became printed or, I may rather say, photographed on my retina, with a sharpness and vividness that was almost painful. I saw the great plumed bed where the rich man lay: again the thin Hogarthian figure of the younger step-brother, in the old costume, stole with silent foot through

garden. It was there the poisoner had stood, the night he distilled the laurel-water, talking to two tenants who had come to see his sick brother. Stately as the house was, guarded by its avenue of limes and girt with its broad gardens, I could not help fancying that a curse still rested upon it. There was a malign unhappy look about it that weighed on my too active imagination, so that a curious presentiment of some impending evil came over me, as the great bell, dragged from its socket, gave forth a clamorous jangling clang, that seemed to echo through endless passages with a querulous clamour that I thought would never cease.

* * * * *

The dinner was dull. Lady Lawford, whom I had found so delightful, so charming, so vivacious at Paris, seemed oppressed with the social difficulties of her county position, and to be unequal to the task of entertaining

pricked up his ears, 'we want your help at once. A poor fellow has been thrown, and a good deal hurt.'

Then seeing me, his face grew graver; he advanced to me and offered his hand. 'My dear Mrs. H——,' he said, 'you mustn't be alarmed, but your husband has been thrown in trying a gate; his shoulder is put out, and one of his ribs I'm afraid of—but it will be all right directly.'

I remember no more; they told me afterwards that I fainted. By nature I was strong-nerved, but from Sir Edward's manner I formed an immediate notion that my husband was dangerously injured, and so indeed it proved.

* * * * *

It was a week before my husband was out of danger. He had dislocated his shoulder and broken two ribs, besides receiving a painful injury on his knee-cap. I watched him day and night, and gave him myself the narcotics that were required to give him the necessary sleep; for a neuralgic affection attended some of the contusions, and a low fever followed, to allay which rest was indispensable.

It was the ninth day, if I remember right, that, pale, anxious, and exhausted by want of sleep, I came for the first time since my husband's accident to take my doleful seat at the dinner-table. Sir Edward was very frank and cordial; untiring in his attentions to me, and in his sympathy for me.

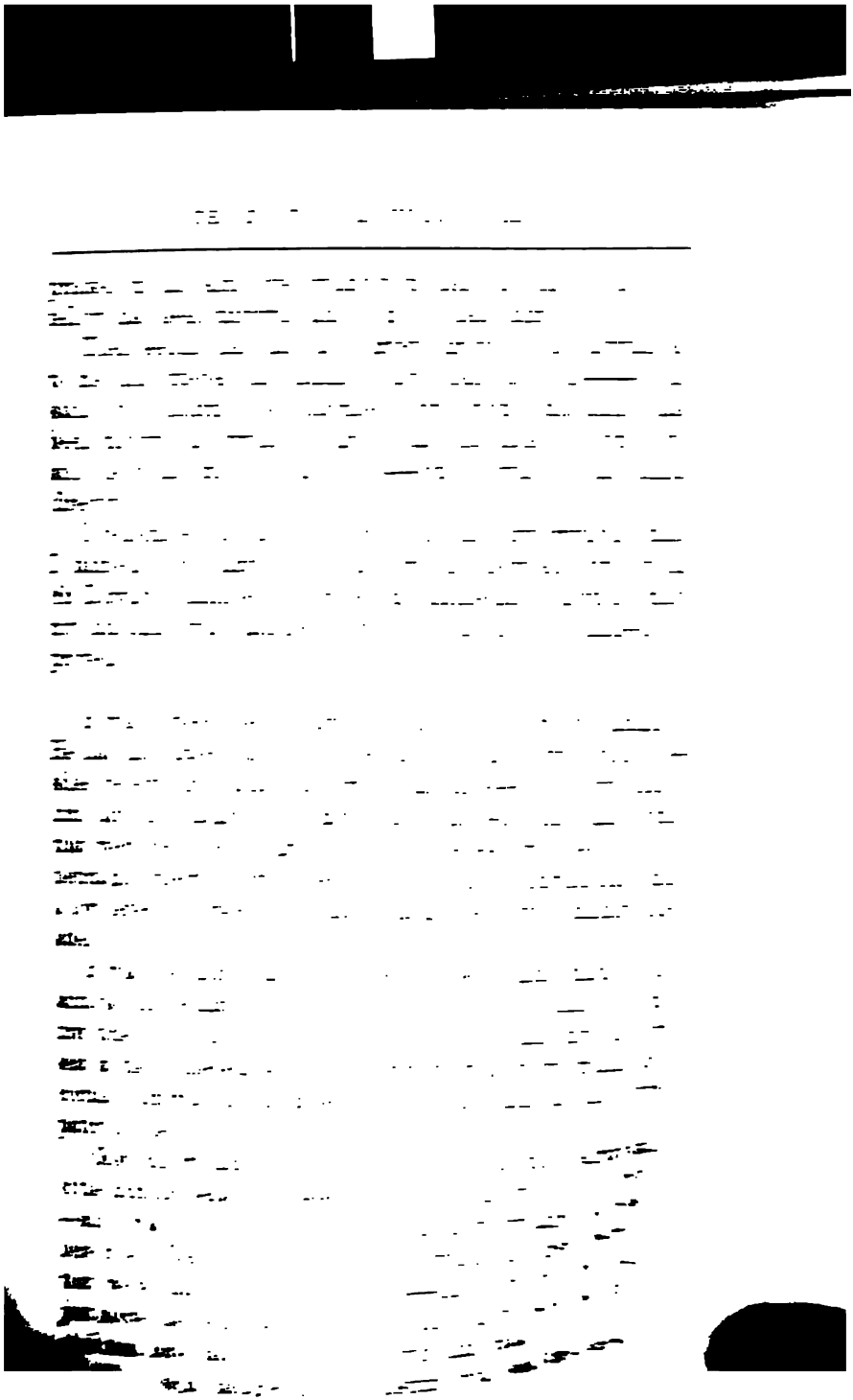
'Most unfortunate!' he said, 'and just at the beginning of the hunting season too—at the end one would not care—and I was so anxious to show him how straight our set here rode. Tell him, poor fellow, when he gets better, that we've had to shoot Parepa—she'd broken her leg just above the fetlock—but I'd rather have shot all my stud than have had him bowled over like that.'

'There is no danger now, I assure you,' said the ever-

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]



lasting country doctor, who seemed perennial at Lawford Hall banquets, 'I assure you on my honour, as a professional man, if he is only careful, and we can keep up this artificial sleep without injury to his sanguineous circulation and his digestive organs.'

'Ah! this riding, like the driving of Jehu, the son of Nimshi, Sir Edward,' said the equally perennial rector, 'is very much on the increase with our country aristocracy, and is likely, I fear, to be attended with most terrible casualties. Where do you get your moselle, Sir Edward?'

The inevitable old-maid sisters uttered their usual exclamations, whenever the accident was alluded to, of 'Shocking—shocking! Oh, dear, it is dreadful to think of!'

I bore it as long as I could, but that vast evening—a century in itself—was no bad preparation to a year at the hulks. Oh, that never-ceasing sonata of Beethoven, beaten out with remorseless exactitude by the rector's conscientious daughter! oh, the wearisomeness of that strictly scientific rubber, at which I assisted as in a dream! At last the playing grew sleepier and sleepier; Sir Edward, tired with foxhunting, fell asleep as the cards were being shuffled; and I gave an internal three times three when the servant announced the first carriage, and Lady Lawford said:

'Well, I think we're all getting sleepy together; so perhaps we'd better go to bed.'

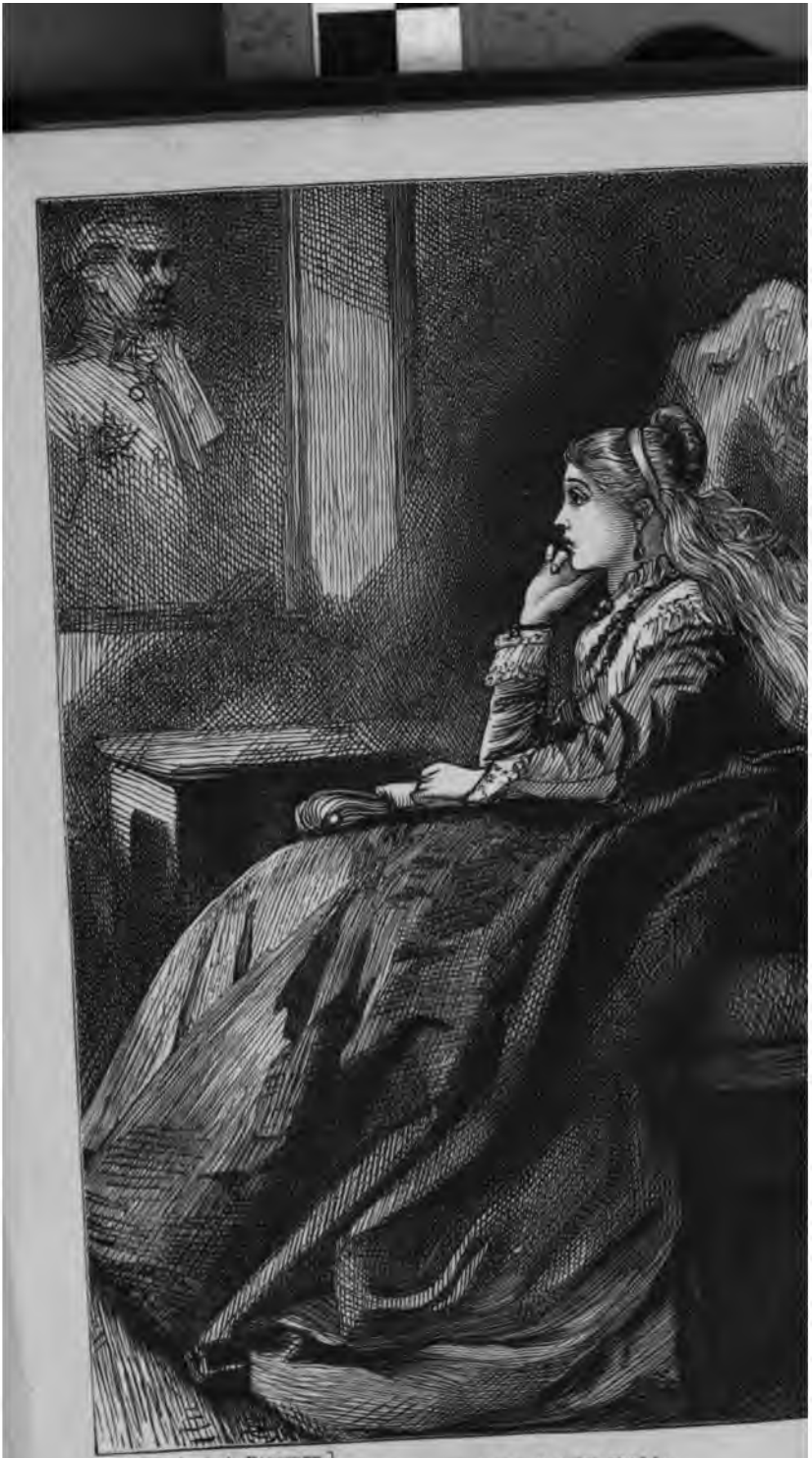
Could this be the Lady Lawford I had known in Paris, I thought, as I mounted the old oak staircase, and, with a half-alarmed look at my own shadow, entered the long corridor, in which our room was the only one inhabited. A miserable visit it had been. If past trouble weighed upon the house, was the shadow of that crime to cast a gloom upon the race for ever? I could not account for the change in people I had known so gay and pleasant, and I puzzled myself in vain to invent a reason. Extra-

vagant I might have expected to find them, their life a ceaseless whirl of excitement; but careworn, humdrum—it seemed impossible. One would really have thought that Sir Edward's father had been the murderer, instead of some grandfather's cousin, who had left no children. Oh, that George was well, I thought, that we could get away from this dreadful place!

I uttered these words aloud as I opened the bedroom door, so loud that I almost thought they might have waked George; but there he lay, in a deep sleep, breathing heavily, and with one bandaged arm resting upon the counterpane. There was no lamp lit in the room, but a cheerful wood fire blazed in the grate, and merry shadows danced on the ceiling. The medicine-bottles were drawn up in ghastly rank and file on the mantelpiece, and the careful servant had left jelly and meat-essence and some fruit ready for my use on a side-table.

I threw myself into a great carved chair that stood by the fire, and listened to my husband's breathing. There was no sound but that and the measured ticking of an old clock in the corridor. A bolt shot, a door slammed far away in some distant wing of the house; then the house seemed to fall into the profoundest sleep. It was still as the family vault. Once a bough of clematis at the window tapped against the glass, as if a fairy was begging admittance: once a cold breath of air—wafted from I knew not where, and going no one knew whither—crept from under the door, and flowed in a cold invisible current through the room in a ghostly kind of way. Half an hour later, as I sat and watched, the wind seemed to spring into a sudden sort of rumbling and bluster in the great chimney, then sank again to silence, gagged by some secret power which it could not resist. I was looking at the fire, thinking of I know not what, waiting for half-past one, when I was to try and rouse George to give him the strengthening medicine, when my eyes all at once

fell on a picture in a row of portraits I had not before especially noticed; it was one of four that hung in a dark corner of the room, very dark by day, and within the shadow of the heavy crimson curtains; but now the firelight gleamed full on it, and I could see its features as clearly as if a sunbeam had fallen full upon the spot. It represented a man of about thirty; the features were firm, but rather sharp and Voltairian; the powdered hair, gathered into a club, was tied with ribbon; the thin-lipped mouth wore a cold set smile. A sudden thought, from which I could not divest myself, arose in my mind—it was the portrait of the murderer. Just such a refined serpentish face I had imagined his to be. The scene of that tragedy came again into my mind: that was the face that had bent over the dead body with affected compassion; that had smiled in triumph upon the gardener; that had angrily rebuked the sister for complaining of his wish to rinse the fatal bottle; that the face that with practised courtesy had pretended to invite every inquiry. I knew the portrait would not be there if the Lawfords knew of its existence; but still I could not help thinking that the portrait it was, and that the name of the wretch it represented had in the lapse of time been forgotten. Consigned to exile in a garret, the picture had, somehow or other, with a sort of diabolic persistency found its way back to its old haunts. Perhaps this had been his own bedroom, and that close by was the locked-up chamber where he had distilled the poison. Perhaps (and this terrible thought made me shudder in spite of myself) this was the very room where the sick man had died in agony. Oh, this terrible house! I should never feel happy in it again. My mind relapsed into its old train of associations. One special scene occurred to me: it was that where the two doctors, sent for by the murderer, came to make an examination of the body. He received them in the hall with a candle in his hand, and invited them in. He was courteous and obliged.



Drawn by J. A. Pasquier.] THE GHOST OF LAWFORD HALL.

Sir William Wheeler, he said, had wished for the examination. For what purpose? they asked. Merely to satisfy the family, he said; and showed them a letter from Sir William, expressing such a wish, 'merely that those who had been intimate with the dead might be beyond suspicion.' Had Sir William written no other letter? asked the more suspicious of the doctors. Yes, there had been another, equally friendly. This second letter had been by no means friendly; it had indeed words which expressed a suspicion of poison. The guilty man pretended to feel for this letter in his waistcoat-pocket, and in doing so pulled out an envelope. The doctor had only time for one glance, but that glance was sufficient to show it was directed in Sir William's handwriting; still he said nothing. The examination did not take place, and the detection of the crime was for a time deferred, till a keener and less trustful medical man threw himself with untiring energy into the pursuit of the subtle criminal.

I looked up; it was half-past one. I went at once to the bedside and tried to rouse my husband to give him his medicine, but he only stirred once reluctantly, gave a deep sigh, and relapsed into sleep. It was better to let him sleep; so undressing and putting on my dressing-gown, I pressed together the wood, now burnt to a white ash, and threw myself on the bed beside my husband. I was just sinking into a doze, when a slight sound disturbed me. I was highly sensitive just then from want of sleep, and in a moment I recovered my senses. It was a faint sound, like some one trying the handle of the bedroom door. I listened again—all was still. It might have been a rat scratching behind the wainscot: at night the faintest sound becomes magnified by the imagination. I sat up and listened: it was nothing. The burning wood just then gave way, and so broke into a slight blaze. I lay down again, and I think fell asleep. I was awoke, not by any sound, but by a creeping indescribable sense of some-

thing supernatural and terrible. I looked up without moving, and saw—to an infinite horror that paralysed every limb—the door softly noiselessly open, and from the outer darkness the figure of an old man, dressed in an old yellow-silk dressing-gown, glide in. He turned as he silently closed the door, and I saw that his thin emaciated face was pale as the dead; that his head was bandaged and his jaw bound up as that of a corpse is bound. The vacant eyes, that seemed entirely colourless, were bent on the fireplace, and the figure seemed not to notice the bed, or those who were on it. Slowly gliding over the floor, the spirit of the murdered man—for such it seemed to me to be—moved towards the fire, and there stood for a moment, as if wrapped in thought. It then took a bottle from the row on the mantelpiece, examined it carefully, and went through the action of filling a glass with it. The figure then sat down in the old chair by the fire, and sat there moving its thin white hands, that seemed almost transparent, before and over the flame. My courage recovering itself slowly, I began now to question myself seriously as to whether I was delirious or dreaming. To be sure I was awake—softly I stretched out my hand and pressed my husband's arm. He slightly moved, and uttered a faint groan. I looked up and counted the green and red flowers in the cornice of the bed. I recalled the position of the bell, which was out of my reach. I pulled off my rings, and put them on again. I even took out my watch, and saw the time. It was a quarter past two.

As I lay there reasoning with myself that the half-open door and the pale figure in the faded yellow-silk dressing-gown were only illusions of the senses, arising from an imagination rendered sensitive by excitement, I again pressed my husband's hand tightly, so tightly that he moved and feebly groaned. At that sound the figure rose from the chair, stirred together the embers, and advanced slowly towards the bed. To my indescribable terror in

the firelight, I then saw that in one hand it held a long glancing sharp knife, the blade of which it held turned upwards against its arm.

The wood ashes in the grate had now burned so low that they only cast a faint red glimmer on the floor, but there was still quite enough light on the end of the bed for me to see that the figure, raising the knife, was stealing towards me. I was frozen with terror, and had perhaps less power of voluntary movement left through my fear than I imagined, for I lay there uttering no cry, moving no limb. At that moment the figure struck against a chair that stood by the table where I had been reading, and overset it. In a moment my brain seemed to recover its power, my heart to beat with renewed power. That one slight fact convinced me that the figure was not a supernatural one—it might be a murderer or a sleep-walker, but it was common flesh and blood. Its dreadful object I knew not; but there it stood, with the knife in its hand, eyeing us in a blank deadly way, and with a sort of serpent-like malice. I had just resolved to spring upon it, struggle for the weapon, and scream for help, when it turned towards the door, and glided out as silently and in as death-like a way as it had entered. I watched it an instant, then with a sudden flood of fresh life darted from the bed, closed the door, swiftly turned the key, drew the bolt with the rapidity of lightning, and fell back on the floor in a swoon.

* * * * *

The next morning I went down and joined the party at breakfast as usual. I said nothing, but complained of sleeplessness and not feeling well. Great was the sympathy and universal was the cry that I must not sit up watching another night.

'My dear Mrs. ——, you will take these things quieter a year hence,' said Sir Edward cynically.

I saw Lady Lawford fixing her eyes on me with a peculiar earnestness.

When we had done breakfast Lady Lawford took me quietly apart into her boudoir.

'Mrs. ——,' she said, taking my hand, 'you look very ill. I am a woman of the world, and older than you. You cannot deceive me; something terrible must have happened to you last night. I think I can guess what it was. It was not the watching alone made your hand shake as it now does. Come, dear, tell me.'

I told her all, and concealed nothing, from the thought about the poisoner's portrait to the moment that I fainted. I saw her face grow very sad and serious as I went on. When I had done she heaved a great sigh.

'My dear,' she said, 'I can and must explain this mystery, though I would have concealed it from almost every one but you. We have, in a distant wing of the house, an insane person—an old man, a relation of Sir Edward's. He was fond of Sir Edward when a boy, and my husband in gratitude for his kindness took care of him when his wife and friends deserted him. He is a great care to us, as at times he is subject to paroxysms of homicidal mania. He is very cunning and dangerous, and has to be strictly watched, especially at such periods. Last night the person in charge of him, who had been drinking with the upper servants, fell asleep, as he now confesses; and the old man, watching his opportunity, stole from the room, and passed down a back staircase leading to the kitchen. There he secreted a large carving-knife left in the butler's pantry by one of the servants, and crossed to your side of the house. The man awaking pursued him, and found him crouching in the hall; but gathered from his few incoherent words that he had entered some bedroom, either yours or one near it. This is the whole mystery, my dear Mrs. ——, and I can only

deeply regret you should have been placed for a moment in such great danger.'

We remained—were, indeed, obliged to remain for days more—in the house; but I was, I must confess, very glad, in spite of Lady Lawford's hospitality, to see the coach that was to take us away drive up to the front door. Often in my dreams that old Tudor window, the great iron gate, the portrait, and the ghostly figure in the old yellow dressing-gown, figure in wild nightmare complications.

A DEBT OF HONOUR.

A Ghost Story.

BY SIR CHARLES L. YOUNG, BART.

HUSH! what was that cry, so low but yet so piercing, so strange but yet so sorrowful? It was not the marmot upon the side of the Righi—it was not the heron down by the lake; no, it was distinctively human. Hush! there it is again—from the churchyard which I have just left!

Not ten minutes have elapsed since I was sitting on the low wall of the churchyard of Weggis, watching the calm glories of the moonlight illuminating with silver splendour the Lake of Lucerne; and I am certain there was no one within the enclosure but myself.

I am mistaken, surely. What a silence there is upon the night! Not a breath of air now to break up into a thousand brilliant ripples the long reflection of the August moon, or to stir the foliage of the chestnuts; not a voice in the village; no splash of oar upon the lake. All life seems at perfect rest, and the solemn stillness that reigns about the topmost glaciers of St. Gothard has spread its mantle over the warmer world below.

I must not linger; as it is, I shall have to wake up the porter to let me into the hotel. I hurry on.

Not ten paces, though. Again I hear the cry. This time it sounds to me like the long sad sob of a wearied and broken heart. Without staying to reason with myself, I quickly retrace my steps.

I stumble about among the iron crosses and the graves, and displace in my confusion wreaths of immortelles and fresher flowers. A huge mausoleum stands between me and the wall upon which I had been sitting not a quarter of an hour ago. The mausoleum casts a deep shadow upon the side nearest to me. Ah! something is stirring there. I strain my eyes—the figure of a man passes slowly out of the shade, and silently occupies my place upon the wall. It must have been his lips that gave out that miserable sound.

What shall I do? Compassion and curiosity are strong. The man whose heart can be rent so sorely ought not to be allowed to linger here with his despair. He is gazing, as I did, upon the lake. I mark his profile—clear cut and symmetrical; I catch the lustre of large eyes. The face, as I can see it, seems very still and placid. I may be mistaken; he may merely be a wanderer like myself; perhaps he heard the three strange cries, and has also come to seek the cause. I feel impelled to speak to him.

I pass from the path by the church to the east side of the mausoleum, and so come towards him, the moon full upon his features. Great heaven! how pale his face is!

'Good-evening, sir. I thought myself alone here, and wondered that no other travellers had found their way to this lovely spot. Charming, is it not?'

For a moment he says nothing, but his eyes are full upon me. At last he replies,

'It is charming, as you say, Mr. Reginald Westcar.'

'You know me?' I exclaim, in astonishment.

'Pardon me, I can scarcely claim a personal acquaintance. But yours is the only English name entered to-day in the Livre des Etrangers.'

'You are staying at the Hôtel de la Concorde, then?'

An inclination of the head is all the answer vouchsafed.

'May I ask,' I continue, 'whether you heard just now a very strange cry repeated three times?'

A pause. The lustrous eyes seem to search me through and through—I can hardly bear their gaze. Then he replies,

'I fancy I heard the echoes of some such sounds as you describe.'

The *echoes!* Is this, then, the man who gave utterance to those cries of woe? is it possible? The face seems so passionless; but the pallor of those features bears witness to some terrible agony within.

'I thought some one must be in distress,' I rejoin hastily, 'and I hurried back to see if I could be of any service.'

'Very good of you,' he answers coldly; 'but surely such a place as this is not unaccustomed to the voice of sorrow.'

'No doubt. My impulse was a mistaken one.'

'But kindly meant. You will not sleep less soundly for acting on that impulse, Reginald Westcar.'

He rises as he speaks. He throws his cloak round him, and stands motionless. I take the hint. My mysterious countryman wishes to be alone. Some one that he has loved and lost lies buried here.

'Good-night, sir,' I say, as I move in the direction of the little chapel at the gate. 'Neither of us will sleep the less soundly for thinking of the perfect repose that reigns around this place.'

'What do you mean?' he asks.

'The dead,' I reply, as I stretch my hand towards the graves. 'Do you not remember the lines of Macbeth?

"After life's fitful fever he sleeps well."'

'But *you* have never died, Reginald Westcar. You know nothing of the sleep of death.'

For the third time he speaks my name almost familiarly, and—I know not why—a shudder passes through

me. I have no time, in my turn, to ask him what he means; for he strides silently away into the shadow of the church, and I, with a strange sense of oppression upon me, return to my hotel.

The events which I have just related passed in vivid recollection through my mind as I travelled northward one cold November day in the year 185-. About six months previously I had taken my degree at Oxford, and had since been enjoying a trip upon the Continent; and on my return to London I found a letter awaiting me from my lawyers, informing me, somewhat to my astonishment, that I had succeeded to a small estate in Cumberland. I must tell you exactly how this came about. My mother was a Miss Ringwood, and she was the youngest of three children; the eldest was Aldina, the second was Geoffrey, and the third (my mother) Alice. Their mother (who had been a widow since my mother's birth) lived at this little place in Cumberland, and which was known as The Shallows; she died shortly after my mother's marriage with my father, Captain Westcar. My aunt Aldina and my uncle Geoffrey—the one at that time aged twenty-eight, and the other twenty-six—continued to reside at The Shallows. My father and mother had to go to India, where I was born, and where, when quite a child, I was left an orphan. A few months after my mother's marriage my aunt disappeared; a few weeks after that event, and my uncle Geoffrey dropped down dead, as he was playing at cards with Mr. Maryon, the proprietor of a neighbouring mansion known as The Mere. A fortnight after my uncle's death, my aunt Aldina returned to The Shallows, and never left it again till she was carried out in her coffin to her grave in the churchyard. Ever since her return from her mysterious disappearance she maintained an impenetrable reserve. As a schoolboy I visited her twice or thrice, but these visits depressed my youth-

ful spirits to such an extent, that as I grew older I excused myself from accepting my aunt's not very pressing invitations; and at the time I am now speaking of I had not seen her for eight or ten years. I was rather surprised, therefore, when she bequeathed me The Shallows, which, as the surviving child, she inherited under her mother's marriage settlement.

But The Shallows had always exercised a grim influence over me, and the knowledge that I was now going to it as my home oppressed me. The road seemed unusually dark, cold, and lonely. At last I passed the lodge, and two hundred yards more brought me to the porch. Very soon the door was opened by an elderly female, whom I well remembered as having been my aunt's housekeeper and cook. I had pleasant recollections of her, and was glad to see her. To tell the truth, I had not anticipated my visit to my newly-acquired property with any great degree of enthusiasm; but a very tolerable dinner had an inspiriting effect, and I was pleased to learn that there was a bin of old madeira in the cellar. Naturally I soon grew cheerful, and consequently talkative; and summoned Mrs. Balk for a little gossip. The substance of what I gathered from her rather diffusive conversation was as follows:

My aunt had resided at The Shallows ever since the death of my uncle Geoffrey, but she had maintained a silent and reserved habit; and Mrs. Balk was of opinion that she had had some great misfortune. She had persistently refused all intercourse with the people at The Mere. Squire Maryon, himself a cold and taciturn man, had once or twice showed a disposition to be friendly, but she had sternly repulsed all such overtures. Mrs. Balk was of opinion that Miss Ringwood was not 'quite right,' as she expressed it, on some topics; especially did she seem impressed with the idea that The Mere ought to belong to her. It appeared that the Ringwoods and

Maryons were distant connections; that The Mere belonged in former times to a certain Sir Henry Benet; that he was a bachelor, and that Squire Maryon's father and old Mr. Ringwood were cousins of his, and that there was some doubt as to which was the real heir; that Sir Henry, who disliked old Maryon, had frequently said he had set any chance of dispute at rest, by bequeathing The Mere property by will to Mr. Ringwood, my mother's father; that, on his death, no such will could be found; and the family lawyers agreed that Mr. Maryon was the legal inheritor, and my uncle Geoffrey and his sisters must be content to take The Shallows, or nothing at all. Mr. Maryon was comparatively rich, and the Ringwoods poor, consequently they were advised not to enter upon a costly lawsuit. My aunt Aldina maintained to the last that Sir Henry had made a will, and that Mr. Maryon knew it, but had destroyed or suppressed the document. I did not gather from Mrs. Balk's narrative that Miss Ringwood had any foundation for her belief, and I dismissed the notion at once as baseless.

'And my uncle Geoffrey died of apoplexy, you say, Mrs. Balk?'

'*I* don't say so, sir, no more did Miss Ringwood; but *they* said so.'

'Whom do you mean by *they*?'

'The people at The Mere—the young doctor, a friend of Squire Maryon's, who was brought over from York, and the rest; he fell heavily from the chair, and his head struck against the fender.'

'Playing at cards with Mr. Maryon, I think you said.'

'Yes, sir; he was too fond of cards, I believe, was Mr. Geoffrey.'

'Is Mr. Maryon seen much in the county—is he hospitable?'

'Well, sir, he goes up to London a good deal, and has some friends down from town occasionally; but he does

not seem to care much about the people in the neighbourhood.'

'He has some children, Mrs. Balk?'

'Only one daughter, sir; a sweet pretty thing she is. Her mother died when Miss Agnes was born.'

'You have no idea, Mrs. Balk, what my aunt Aldina's great misfortune was?'

'Well, sir, I can't help thinking it must have been a love affair. She always hated men so much.'

'Then why did she leave The Shallows to me, Mrs. Balk?'

'Ah, you are laughing, sir. No doubt she considered that The Mere ought to belong to you, as the heir of the Ringwoods, and she placed you here, as near as might be to the place.'

'In hopes that I might marry Miss Maryon, eh, Mrs. Balk?'

'You are laughing again, sir. I don't imagine she thought so much of that, as of the possibility of your discovering something about the missing will.'

I bade the communicative Mrs. Balk good-night, and retired to my bedroom—a low, wide, sombre, oak-panelled chamber. I must confess that family stories had no great interest for me, living apart from them at school and college as I had done; and as I undressed I thought more of the probabilities of sport the eight hundred acres of wild shooting belonging to The Shallows would afford me, than of the supposed will my poor aunt had evidently worried herself about so much. Thoroughly tired after my long journey, I soon fell fast asleep amid the deep shadows of the huge four-poster I mentally resolved to chop up into firewood at an early date, and substitute for it a more modern iron bedstead.

How long I had been asleep I do not know, but I suddenly started up, the echo of a long sad cry ringing in my ears.

I listened eagerly—sensitive to the slightest sound—painfully sensitive as one is only in the deep silence of the night.

I heard the old-fashioned clock I had noticed on the stairs strike three. The reverberation seemed to last a long time, then all was silent again. 'A dream,' I muttered to myself, as I lay down upon the pillow; 'madeira is a heating wine. But what can I have been dreaming of?'

Sleep seemed to have gone altogether, and the busy mind wandered among the continental scenes I had lately visited. By and by I found myself in memory once more within the Weggis churchyard. I was satisfied; I had traced my dream to the cries that I had heard there. I turned round to sleep again. Perhaps I fell into a doze—I cannot say; but again I started up at the repetition, as it seemed outside my window, of that cry of sadness and despair. I hastily drew aside the heavy curtains of my bed—at that moment the room seemed to be illuminated with a dim unearthly light—and I saw gradually growing into human shape the figure of a woman. I recognised in it my aunt, Miss Ringwood. Horror-struck, I gazed at the apparition; it advanced a little—the lips moved—I heard it distinctly say:

'*Reginald Westcar, The Mere belongs to you. Compel John Maryon to pay the debt of honour!*'

I fell back senseless.

When next I returned to consciousness, it was when I was called in the morning; the shutters were opened, and I saw the red light of the dawning winter sun.

There is a strange sympathy between the night and the mind. All one's troubles represent themselves as increased a hundredfold if one wakes in the night, and begins to think about them. A muscular pain becomes the certainty of an incurable internal disease; and a head-

ache suggests incipient softening of the brain. But all these horrors are dissipated with the morning light, and the after-glow of a cold bath turns them into jokes. So it was with me on the morning after my arrival at The Shallows. I accounted most satisfactorily for all that had occurred, or seemed to have occurred, during the night; and resolved that, though the old madeira was uncommonly good, I must be careful in future not to drink more than a couple of glasses after dinner. I need scarcely say that I said nothing to Mrs. Balk of my bad dreams, and shortly after breakfast I took my gun and went out in search of such game as I might chance to meet with. At three o'clock I sent the keeper home, as his capacious pockets were pretty well filled, telling him that I thought I knew the country, and should stroll back leisurely. The gray gloom of the November evening was spreading over the sky as I came upon a small plantation which I believed belonged to me. I struck straight across it; emerging from its shadows, I found myself by a small stream and some marshy land; on the other side another small plantation. A snipe got up; I fired, and tailored it. I marked the bird into this other plantation, and followed. Up got a covey of partridges—bang, bang!—one down by the side of an oak. I was about to enter this covert, when a lady and gentleman emerged, and, struck with the unpleasant thought that I was possibly trespassing, I at once went forward to apologise.

Before I could say a word, the gentleman addressed me.

'May I ask, sir, if I have given you permission to shoot over my preserves?'

'I beg to express my great regret, sir,' I replied, as I lifted my hat in acknowledgment of the lady's presence, 'that I should have trespassed upon your land. I can only plead, as my excuse, that I fully believed I was still upon the manor belonging to The Shallows.'

'Gentlemen who go out shooting ought to know the limits of their estates,' he answered harshly; 'the boundaries of The Shallows are well defined, nor is the area they contain so very extensive. You have no right upon this side the stream, sir; oblige me by returning.'

I merely bowed, for I was nettled by his tone, and as I turned away I noticed that the young lady whispered to him.

'One moment, sir,' he said. 'My daughter suggests the possibility of your being the new owner of The Shallows. May I ask if this is so?'

It had not occurred to me before, but I understood in a moment to whom I had been speaking, and I replied:

'Yes, Mr. Maryon—my name is Westcar.'

Such was my introduction to Mr. and Miss Maryon. The proprietor of The Mere appeared to be a gentleman, but his manners were cold and reserved, and a careful observer might have remarked a perpetual restlessness in the eyes, as if they were physically incapable of regarding the same object for more than a moment. He was about sixty years of age, apparently; and though he now and again made an effort to carry himself upright, the head and shoulders soon drooped again, as if the weight of years, and, it might be, the memory of the past, were a heavy load to carry. Of Miss Maryon it is sufficient to say that she was nineteen or twenty, and it did not need a second glance to satisfy me that her beauty was of no ordinary kind.

I must hurry over the records of the next few weeks. I became a frequent visitor at The Mere. Mr. Maryon's manner never became cordial, but he did not seem displeased to see me; and as to Agnes, well, she certainly was not displeased either.

I think it was on Christmas-day that I suddenly discovered that I was desperately in love. Miss Maryon had been for two or three days confined to her room by

a bad cold, and I found myself in a great state of anxiety to see her again. I am sorry to say that my thoughts wandered a good deal when I was at church upon that festival, and I could not help thinking what ample room there was for a bridal procession up the spacious aisle. Suddenly my eyes rested upon a mural tablet, inscribed, 'To the memory of Aldina Ringwood.' Then with a cold thrill there came back upon me what I had almost forgotten, the dream, or whatever it was, that had occurred on that first night at The Shallows; and those strange words—'The Mere belongs to you. Compel John Maryon to pay the debt of honour!' Nothing but the remembrance of Agnes' sweet face availed for the time to banish the vision, the statement, and the bidding.

Miss Maryon was soon down-stairs again. Did I flatter myself too much in thinking that she was as glad to see me as I was to see her? No—I felt sure that I did not. Then I began to reflect seriously upon my position. My fortune was small—quite enough for me, but not enough for two; and as she was heiress of The Mere and a comfortable rent-roll of some six or eight thousand a year, was it not natural that Mr. Maryon expected her to make what is called 'a good match'? Still, I could not conceal from myself the fact, that he evinced no objection whatever to my frequent visits at his house, nor to my taking walks with his daughter when he was unable to accompany us.

One bright frosty day I had been down to the lake with Miss Maryon, and had enjoyed the privilege of teaching her to skate; and on returning to the house, we met Mr. Maryon upon the terrace. He walked with us to the conservatory; we went in to examine the plants, and he remained outside, pacing up and down the terrace. Both Agnes and myself were strangely silent; perhaps my tongue had found an eloquence upon the ice which was well met by a shy thoughtfulness upon her part. But

there was a lovely colour upon her cheeks, and I experienced a very considerable and unusual fluttering about my heart. It happened that as we were standing at the door of the conservatory, both of us silently looking away from the flowers upon the frosty view, that our eyes lighted at the same time upon Mr. Maryon. He, too, was apparently regarding the prospect, when suddenly he paused and staggered back, as if something unexpected met his gaze.

'Oh, poor papa! I hope he is not going to have one of his fits!' exclaimed Agnes.

'Fits! Is he subject to such attacks?' I inquired.

'Not ordinary fits,' she answered hurriedly: 'I hardly know how to explain them. They come upon him occasionally, and generally at this period of the year.'

'Shall we go to him?' I suggested.

'No; you cannot help him; and he cannot bear that they should be noticed.'

We both watched him. His arms were stretched up above his head, and again he recoiled a step or two. I sought for an explanation in Agnes' face.

'A stranger!' she exclaimed. 'Who can it be?'

I looked towards Mr. Maryon. A tall figure of a man had come from the farther side of the house; he wore a large loose coat and a kind of military cap upon his head.

'Doubtless you are surprised to see me, John,' we heard the new-comer say, in a confident voice, 'but I am not the devil, man, that you should greet me with such a peculiar attitude.' He held out his hand, and continued, 'Come, don't let the warmth of old fellowship be all on one side, this wintry day.'

We could see that Mr. Maryon took the proffered right hand with his left for an instant, then seemed to shrink away, but exchanged no word of this greeting.

'I don't understand this,' said Agnes; and we both hurried forward.

The stranger, seeing Agnes approach, lifted his cap.

'Ah, your daughter, John, no doubt. I see the likeness to her lamented mother. Pray introduce me.'

Mr. Maryon's usually pallid features had assumed a still paler hue, and he said, in a low voice:

'Colonel Bludyer—my daughter.'

Agnes barely bowed.

'Charmed to renew your acquaintance, Miss Maryon. When last I saw you, you were quite a baby; but your father and I are very old friends—are we not, John?'

Mr. Maryon vaguely nodded his head.

'Well, John, you have often pressed your hospitality upon me, but till now I have never had an opportunity of availing myself of your kind offers; so I have brought my bag, and intend at last to give you the pleasure of my company for a few days.'

I certainly should have thought that a man of Mr. Maryon's disposition would have resented such conduct as this, or, at all events, have given this self-invited guest a chilling welcome. Mr. Maryon, however, in a confused and somewhat stammering tone, said that he was glad Colonel Bludyer had come at last, and bade his daughter go and make the necessary arrangements. Agnes, in silent astonishment, entered the house, and then Mr. Maryon turned to me hastily and bade me good-bye. In a by no means comfortable frame of mind I returned to The Shallows.

The sudden advent of this miscellaneous Colonel was naturally somewhat irritating to me. Not only did I regard the man as an intolerable bore, but I could not help fancying that he was something more than an old friend of Mr. Maryon's; in fact, I was led to judge by Mr. Maryon's strange conduct that this Bludyer had some power over him which might be exercised to the detriment of the Maryon family, and I was convinced there was some mystery it was my business to penetrate.

The following day I went up to The Mere to see if Miss Maryon was desirous of renewing her skating lesson. I found the party in the billiard-room, Agnes marking for her father and the Colonel. Mr. Maryon, whom I knew to be an exceptionally good player, seemed incapable of making a decent stroke; the Colonel, on the other hand, could evidently give a professional fifteen, and beat him easily. We all went down to the lake together. I had no chance of any quiet conversation with Agnes; the Colonel was perpetually beside us.

I returned home disgusted. For two whole days I did not go near The Mere. On the third day I went up, hoping that the horrid Colonel would be gone. It was beginning to snow when I left The Shallows at about two o'clock in the afternoon, and Mrs. Balk foretold a heavy storm, and bade me not be late returning.

The black winter darkness in the sky deepened as I approached The Mere. I was ushered again into the billiard-room. Agnes was marking, as upon the previous occasion, but two days had worked a sad difference in her face. Mr. Maryon hardly noticed my entrance; he was flushed, and played eagerly; the Colonel was boisterous, declaring that John had never played better twenty years ago. I relieved Agnes of the duty of marking. The snow fell in a thick layer upon the skylight, and the Colonel became seriously anxious about my return home. As I did not think he was the proper person to give me hints, I resolutely remained where I was, encouraged in my behaviour by the few words I gained from Agnes, and by the looks of entreaty she gave me. I had always considered Mr. Maryon to be an abstemious man, but he drank a good deal of brandy-and-soda during the long game of seven hundred up, and when he succeeded in beating the Colonel by forty-three, he was in roaring spirits, and insisted upon my staying to dinner. Need I say that I accepted the invitation?

I made such toilette as I could in a most unattainable chamber that was allotted to me, and hurried back to the drawing-room in the hope that I might get a few private words with Agnes. I was not disappointed. She, too, had hurried down, and in a few words I learned that this abominable Bludyer was paying her his coarse attentions, and with, apparently, the full consent of Mr. Maryon. My indignation was unbounded. Was it possible that Mr. Maryon intended to sacrifice this fair creature to that repulsive man?

Mr. Maryon had appeared in excellent spirits when dinner began, and the first glass or two of champagne made him merrier than I thought it possible for him to be. But by the time the dessert was on the table he had grown silent and thoughtful; nor did he respond to the warm eulogiums the Colonel passed upon the magnum of claret which was set before us.

After dinner we sat in the library. The Colonel left the room to fetch some cigars he had been loudly extolling. Then Agnes had an opportunity of whispering to me.

'Look at papa—see how strangely he sits—his hands clenching the arms of the chair, his eyes fixed upon the blazing coals! How old he seems to be to-night! His terrible fits are coming on—he is always like this towards the end of January!' The Colonel's return put an end to any further confidential talk.

When we separated for the night, I felt that my going to bed would be purposeless. I felt most painfully wide awake. I threw myself down upon my bed, and worried myself by trying to imagine what secret there could be between Maryon and Bludyer—for that a secret of some kind existed, I felt certain. I tossed about till I heard the stroke of one. A dreadful restlessness had come upon me. It seemed as if the solemn night-side of life was busy waking now, but the silence and solitude of my antique chamber became too much for me. I rose from my bed,

and paced up and down the room. I raked up the dying embers of the fire, and drew an arm-chair to the hearth. I fell into a doze. By and by I woke up suddenly, and I was conscious of stealthy footsteps in the passage. My sense of hearing became painfully acute. I heard the footsteps retreating down the corridor, until they were lost in the distance. I cautiously opened the door, and, shading the candle with my hand, looked out. There was nothing to be seen; but I felt that I could not remain quietly in my room, and, closing the door behind me, I went out in search of I knew not what.

The sitting-rooms and bedrooms in ordinary use at The Mere were in the modern part of the house; but there was an old Elizabethan wing which I had often longed to explore, and in this strange ramble of mine I soon had reason to be satisfied that I was well within it. At the end of an oak-panelled narrow passage a door stood open, and I entered a low sombre apartment fitted with furniture in the style of two hundred years ago. There was something awfully ghostly about the look of this room. A great four-post bedstead, with heavy hangings, stood in a deep recess; a round oak table and two high-backed chairs were in the centre of the room. Suddenly, as I gazed on these things, I heard stealthy footsteps in the passage, and saw a dim light advancing. Acting on a sudden impulse, I extinguished my candle and withdrew into the shadow of the recess, watching eagerly. The footsteps came nearer. My heart seemed to stand still with expectation. They paused outside the door, for a moment really—for an age it seemed to me. Then, to my astonishment, I saw Mr. Maryon enter. He carried a small night-lamp in his hand. Another glance satisfied me that he was walking in his sleep. He came straight to the round table, and set down the lamp. He seated himself in one of the high-backed chairs, his vacant eyes staring at the chair opposite; then his lips began to move quickly,

as if he were addressing some one. Then he rose, went to the bureau, and seemed to take something from it; then he sat down again. What a strange action of his hands! At first I could not understand it; then it flashed upon me that in this dream of his he must be shuffling cards. Yes, he began to deal; then he was playing with his adversary, his lips moving anxiously at times.

A look of terrible eagerness came over the sleep-walker's countenance. With nimble fingers he dealt the cards, and played. Suddenly with a sweep of his hand he seemed to fling the pack into the fireplace, started from his seat, grappled with his unseen adversary, raised his powerful right hand, and struck a tremendous blow. Hush! more footsteps along the passage! Am I deceived? From my concealment I watch for what is to follow. Colonel Bludyer comes in, half dressed, but wide awake.

'You maniac!' I hear him mutter: 'I expected you were given to such tricks as these. Lucky for you no eyes but mine have seen your abject folly. Come back to your room.'

Mr. Maryon is still gazing, his arms lifted wildly above his head, upon the imagined foe whom he had felled to the ground. The Colonel touches him on the shoulder, and leads him away, leaving the lamp. My reasoning faculties had fully returned to me. I held a clue to the secret, and for Agnes' sake it must be followed up. I took the lamp away, and placed it on the table where the chamber candlesticks stood, relit my own candle, and found my way back to my bedroom.

The next morning, when I came down to breakfast, I found Colonel Bludyer warming himself satisfactorily at the blazing fire. I learned from him that our host was far from well, and that Miss Maryon was in attendance upon her father; that the Colonel was charged with all kinds of apologies to me, and good wishes for my safe return home across the snow. I thanked him for the

delivery of the message, while I felt perfectly convinced that he had never been charged with it. However that might be, I never saw Mr. Maryon that morning; and I started back to The Shallows through the snow.

For the next two or three days the weather was very wild, but I contrived to get up to The Mere, and ask after Mr. Maryon. Better, I was told, but unable to see any one. Miss Maryon, too, was fatigued with nursing her father. So there was nothing to do but to trudge home again.

'*Reginald Westcar, The Mere belongs to you. Compel John Maryon to pay the debt of honour!*'

Again and again these words forced themselves upon me, as I listlessly gazed out upon the white landscape. The strange scene that I had witnessed on that memorable night I passed beneath Mr. Maryon's roof had brought them back to my memory with redoubled force, and I began to think that the apparition I had seen—or dreamed of—on my first night at The Shallows had more of truth in it than I had been willing to believe.

Three more days passed away, and a carter-boy from The Mere brought me a note. It was Agnes' handwriting. It said:

'Dear Mr. Westcar,—Pray come up here, if you possibly can. I cannot understand what is the matter with papa; and he wishes me to do a dreadful thing. Do come. I feel that I have no friend but you. I am obliged to send this note privately.'

I need scarcely say that five minutes afterwards I was plunging through the snow towards The Mere. It was already late on that dark February evening as I gained the shrubbery; and as I was pondering upon the best method of securing admittance, I became aware that the figure of a man was hurrying on some yards in front of me. At first I thought it must be one of the gardeners, but all of a sudden I stood still, and my blood seemed to

freeze with horror, as I remarked that the figure in front of me *left no trace of footmarks on the snow!* My brain reeled for a moment, and I thought I should have fallen; but I recovered my nerves, and when I looked before me again, it had disappeared. I pressed on eagerly. I arrived at the front door—it was wide open; and I passed through the hall to the library. I heard Agnes' voice.

'No, no, papa. You must not force me to this! I cannot —will not—marry Colonel Bludyer!'

'You *must*,' answered Mr. Maryon, in a hoarse voice; 'you *must* marry him, and save your father from something worse than disgrace!'

Not feeling disposed to play the eavesdropper, I entered the room. Mr. Maryon was standing at the fireplace. Agnes was crouching on the ground at his feet. I saw at once that it was no use for me to dissemble the reason of my visit, and, without a word of greeting, I said:

'Miss Maryon, I have come, in obedience to your summons. If I can prevent any misfortune from falling upon you I am ready to help you with my life. You have guessed that I love you. If my love is returned I am prepared to dispute my claim with any man.'

Agnes, with a cry of joy, rose from her knees, and rushed towards me. Ah! how strong I felt as I held her in my arms!

'I have my answer,' I continued. 'Mr. Maryon, I have reason to believe that your daughter is in fear of the future you have forecast for her. I ask you to regard those fears, and to give her to me, to love and cherish as my wife.'

Mr. Maryon covered his face with his hands; and I could hear him murmur, 'Too late—too late!'

'No, not too late,' I echoed. 'What is this Bludyer to you, that you should sacrifice your daughter to a man

whose very look proclaims him a villain? Nothing can compel you to such a deed—not even *a debt of honour!*'

What it was impelled me to say these last words I know not, but they had an extraordinary effect upon Mr. Maryon. He started towards me, then checked himself: his face was livid, his eyeballs glaring, and he threw up his arms in the strange manner I had already witnessed.

'What is all this?' exclaimed a harsh voice behind me. 'Mr. Westcar insulting Miss Maryon and her father! It is time for me to interfere.' And Colonel Bludyer approached me menacingly. All his jovial manner and fulsome courtesy were gone; and in his flushed face and insolent look the savage rascal was revealed.

'You will interfere at your peril,' I replied. 'I am a younger man than you are, and my strength has not been weakened by drink and dissipation. Take care.'

The villain drew himself up to his full height; and, though he must have been at least some sixty years of age, I felt assured that I should meet with no ordinary adversary if a personal struggle should ensue. Agnes fainted, and I laid her on a sofa.

'Miss Maryon wants air,' said the Colonel, in a calmer voice. 'Excuse me, Mr. Maryon, if I open a window.' He tore open the shutters, and threw up the sash. 'And now, Mr. Westcar, unless you are prepared to be sensible, and make your exit by the door, I shall be under the unpleasant necessity of throwing you out of the window.'

The ruffian advanced towards me as he spoke. Suddenly he paused. His jaw dropped; his hair seemed literally to stand on end; his white lips quivered; he shook, as with an ague; his whole form appeared to shrink. I stared in amazement at the awful change. A strange thrill shot through me, as I heard a quiet voice say:

'Richard Bludyer, your grave is waiting for you. Go.'

The figure of a man passed between me and him. The

wretched man shrank back, and, with a wild cry, leaped from the window he had opened.

All this time Mr. Maryon was standing like a lifeless statue. In helpless wonder I gazed at the figure before me. I saw clearly the features in profile, and, swift as lightning, my memory was carried back to the unforgotten scene in the churchyard upon the Lake of Lucerne, and I recognised the white face of the young man with whom I there had spoken.

'John Maryon,' said the voice, 'this is the night upon which, a quarter of a century ago, you killed me. It is your last night on earth. You must go through the tragedy again.'

Mr. Maryon, still statue-like, beckoned to the figure, and opened a half-concealed door which led into his study. The strange but opportune visitant seemed to motion to me with a gesture of his hand, which I felt I must obey, and I followed in this weird procession. From the study we mounted by a private staircase to a large well-furnished bedchamber. Here we paused. Mr. Maryon looked tremblingly at the stranger, and said, in a low stammering voice:

'This is my room. In this room, on this night, twenty-five years ago, you told me that you were certain Sir Henry Benet's will was in existence, and that you had made up your mind to dispute my possession to this property. You had discovered letters from Sir Henry to your father which gave you a clue to the spot where that will might be found. You, Geoffrey Ringwood, of generous and extravagant nature, offered to find the will in my presence. It was late at night, as now; all the household slept. I accepted your invitation, and followed you.'

Mr. Maryon ceased; he seemed physically unable to continue. The terrible stranger, in his low echoing voice, replied:

'Go on; confess all.'

'You and I, Geoffrey, had been what the world calls friends. We had been much in London together; we were both passionately fond of cards. We had a common acquaintance, Richard Bludyer. He was present on the 2d of February, when I lost a large sum of money to you at écarté. He hinted to me that you might possibly use these sums in instituting a lawsuit against me for the recovery of this estate. Your intimation that you knew of the existence of the will alarmed me, as it had become necessary for me to remain owner of The Mere. As I have said, I accepted your invitation, and followed you to Sir Henry Benet's room; and now I follow you again.'

As he said these words, Geoffrey Ringwood, or his ghost, passed silently by Mr. Maryon, and led the way into the corridor. At the end of the corridor all three paused outside an oak door, which I remembered well. A gesture from the leader made Mr. Maryon continue:

'On this threshold you told me suddenly that Bludyer was a villain, and had betrayed your sister Aldina; that she had fled with him that night; that he could never marry her, as you had reason to know he had a wife alive. You made me swear to help you in your vengeance against him. We entered the room, as we enter it now.'

Our leader had opened the door of the room, and we were in the same chamber I had wandered to when I had slept at The Mere. The figure of Geoffrey Ringwood paused at the round table, and looked again at Mr. Maryon, who proceeded:

'You went straight to the fifth panel from the fireplace, and then touched a spring, and the panel opened. You said that the will giving this property to your father and his heirs was to be found there. I was convinced that you spoke the truth, but, suddenly remembering your love of gambling, I suggested that we should play for it. You accepted at once. We searched among the papers, and found the will. We placed the will upon the table, and

began to play. We agreed that we would play up to ten thousand pounds. Your luck was marvellous. In two hours the limit was reached. I owed you ten thousand pounds, and had lost The Mere. You laughed, and said, "Well, John, you have had a fair chance. At ten o'clock this morning I shall expect you to pay me *your debt of honour*." I rose; the devil of despair strong upon me. With one hand I swept the cards from the table into the fire, and with the other seized you by the throat, and dealt you a blow upon the temple. You fell dead upon the floor.'

Need I say that, as I heard this fearful narrative, I recognised the actions of the sleep-walker, and understood them all?

'To the end!' said the hollow voice. 'Confess to the end!'

'The doctor who examined your body gave his opinion, at the inquest, that you had died of apoplexy, caused by strong cerebral excitement. My evidence was to the effect that I believed you had lost a very large sum of money to Captain Bludyer, and that you had told me you were utterly unable to pay it. The jury found their verdict accordingly, and I was left in undisturbed possession of The Mere. But the memory of my crime haunted me as only such memories can haunt a criminal, and I became a morose and miserable man. One thing bound me to life —my daughter. When Reginald Westcar appeared upon the scene I thought that the debt of honour would be satisfied if he married Agnes. Then Bludyer reappeared, and he told me that he knew that I had killed you. He threatened to revive the story, to exhume your body, and to say that Aldina Ringwood had told him all about the will. I could purchase his silence only by giving him my daughter, the heiress of The Mere. To this I consented.'

As he said these last words, Mr. Maryon sank heavily into the chair.

The figure of Geoffrey Ringwood placed one ghostly hand upon his left temple, and then passed silently out of the room. I started up, and followed the phantom along the corridor—down the staircase—out at the front door, which still stood open—across the snow-covered lawn—into the plantation; and then it disappeared as strangely as I first had seen it; and, hardly knowing whether I was mad or dreaming, I found my way back to The Shallows.

For some weeks I was ill with brain-fever. When I recovered I was told that terrible things had happened at The Mere. Mr. Maryon had been found dead in Sir Henry Benet's room—an effusion of blood upon the brain, the doctors said—and the body of Colonel Bludyer had been discovered in the snow in an old disused gravel-pit not far from the house.

A year afterwards I married Agnes Maryon; and, if all that I had seen and heard upon that 3d of February was not merely the invention of a fevered brain, the debt of honour was at last discharged, for I, the nephew of the murdered Geoffrey Ringwood, became the owner of The Mere.

WHAT I SAW AFTER THE CHRISTMAS PUDDING.

A DYSPEPTIC VISION; NOT A POEM.

ILLUSTRATED BY ALFRED CROWQUILL.

I DREW this vision on a block of wood,
To make my meaning clearly understood;
For words I found were quite inadequate
To paint my feelings in the dreaming state.
I really can't make out now what could do it—
The plums? the currants? or perhaps the suet?
But altogether, I at once declare
I don't know how I got to bed or where;
Although the truth at once to frankly tell,
That I was taken home by letter L;
This dawned upon me as I tried to think,
And from the water-bottle vainly drink.
I knew I'd stood, with latch-key in my hand,
Staring at what I could not understand;
In vain I tried to find the proper place—
A hundred keyholes stared me in the face.
I waited patiently until they'd done,
And all resolved themselves back into one.
The passage gained, I firmly do declare
I saw a pudding bounding up the stair;
A blue flame rose upon his greasy brow—
I think I see him grinning at me now.
I seized him quickly—he was just as quick,
And changed himself into my candlestick.

[Drawn by ALFRED CROWQUILL.]

WHAT I SAW AFTER EATING MY CHRISTMAS PUDDING.

At last to bed I rolled—I don't know how, sirs:
Next morning I had on my boots and trousers;
But oh! my bed, it seemed to be in motion,
Heaving and rolling, like a troubled ocean;
I felt, oh dear! whilst lying on my back
Exactly what I felt when in a smack
Out fishing, with a party from the beach,
Who were made wretched—at a shilling each.
When just upon the sheets, where they turn down,
I saw the pudding with his visage brown,
With currant eyes, and nose all made of plums,
And almond teeth, with lemon-peel for gums;
I shuddered, as I smelt him steaming hot,
As if he'd risen boiling from the pot.
'Begone!' said I, 'you thing detestable,
Beyond all things so indigestible!'
'Ungrateful fool!' said he, with horrid grin,
'Now you leave off, 'tis time I should begin:
I am King Pudding! prince of all good feasts!
Welcomed by all, except your gourmand beasts;
And yet you dare to lay all at my door,
Not counting up the feast you made before.
'Tis all put down upon your dinner *carte*,
And you shall hear it read before we part.
The turtle soup was good, the punch all ice:
I think, my friend, you took the turtle twice?
Next came the turbot, firm as any rock,
With which you took the champagne and some hock!
Next came the turkey—quite a monster bird!
With sausage stomach, stuffed till quite absurd;
And you were helped, sir, to the very best—
I mean the long white slices from the breast.
And then you turned your all-devouring gaze
To all the *entrées* and the *entremêts;*
Then with the lady with the dark-blue eyes
You kept dividing sundry rich mince-pies,

Saying each pie had happiness in store,
And pressed her on to take a little more.
Next I appeared in burning brandy bed,
Crowned with bright Christmas and his berries red;
Didn't I yield you up a thumping slice,
That quite precluded any helping twice?
With blushing honours came the rich dessert—
You peeled, and pared, and crackèd, I assert;
You drank the wine—they're all upon the *carte*—
And were the last of all the gentlemen to start.
You didn't know your hat, when you would go;
The boy in buttons laughed—for you must know
You bolted from the door, with frantic run,
As if you had been firèd from a gun.
You've lost your watch, your purse, and umbrella,
And there you be, a poor dyspeptic fellow,
Defaming me, the king of all the feast,
As if I, poor pudding, made you such a beast.
I will not have the scandal laid to me,
But have great revenge—as you shall see.'
Quickly my room was filled with rabble rout,
So much confused I could not make them out:
A spectreoscope now gambolled in the air
Close to my face—now here, now there.
At last the pudding with his plummy snout
Made a high bound, and put the candle out.
Like a beefsteak, or good St. Lawrence, I
Upon a gridiron continually did fry;
Until the morning brought a sad reflection
About the pudding and his strong objection.
At last I thought it might have been the wine—
The fault I laid to pudding might be mine—
The mince, the soup—in fact no one can say
What was the fault upon that Christmas-day.

FULL FATHOM FIVE.

BY TOM HOOD.

INTRODUCTION.

I WAS staying with an old college chum, who was incumbent of a small village in the Essex marshes, not far from the Thames. Indeed the ferry, which conveyed those desirous of so much change as is obtainable by crossing from the Essex marshes to the Kentish marshes, took its name from the village, though it was nearly a mile from it, or rather the church, which I suppose one may consider the centre of the village.

This ferry was the property of one John Hurst, a man of about seven-and-forty in reality, but looking older, because he was lined and grizzled with hard work and exposure to rough weather. He was owner of a farm in the village, and a fairly prosperous man. But his wife looked after the farm, while he attended to the ferry. It seemed a strange division of labour, for the farm was of fair size, and reared many an Essex calf; and the ferry was but little frequented. I very much doubt whether the money it realised was sufficient to pay for the repairs and occasional repainting of the unwieldy craft, which Hurst had to tug laboriously from one bank of the river to the other, and back again.

The village was terribly dull, and I found it somewhat difficult to find amusement. I had no taste for district visiting, or amateur clerical labours, so I did not accompany my chum on his parochial pilgrimages. 'Why did I come to such a forsaken spot?' Well, partly for studious reasons, because I was reading for my last examination for my degree; and partly for economical reasons, because I was a little on the wrong side of the book, financially, at Oxford, and was desirous of retrenching in every possible manner. Knowing this my old chum had invited me to his humble 'diggings.' It was not a richly-endowed cure, but he could live on it with fair comfort, and as he said, 'what was enough for one was enough for two'—a maxim on which he acted some years later, by marrying. I may add that, however well the maxim bore the test for a while, it could hardly be expected to be so elastic as to be made to include a rising family.

However, to return to my subject. I found it no slight task to kill time when I had done my day's reading. There was but one place of entertainment in the place — the village alehouse, by title The Barge Aground. But even supposing it had been quite etiquette for the parson's visitor to frequent the local beershop, I should have been little better off for amusement amongst its frequenters, who never opened their mouths except to admit their beer, and did not say a word until they were drunk;—and when they were drunk, they only swore slowly, at intervals, just as they used to imbibe their beer.

Under these circumstances, it was not strange that I made Hurst's acquaintance. I used to go down and sit in the boat with him, smoking and chatting. At first he was a little reserved, but by degrees we became great friends, and he told me his history, which I propose to relate to you as he told it to me, merely correcting certain solecisms, and dressing it up in a readable form.

THE DIVER'S STORY.

'I WAS a diver as a young man. I may say I was born a diver, for my father was one before me. You may have heard of him—Bill Hurst was his name—he was pretty well known in his time, and almost the first that ever went down in the dress without a bell. Even when I started at it, there were not many in the business. Father began to train me for it early, and consequently from habit and experience I got to be considered a first-rate hand, and got my share of employment.

'But you see diving isn't like other things—it's not as good as fishing even. Of course you can't always be sure of a catch, but fish are always saleable when you *can* catch them. There's a constant demand for the article. But with diving it's different. You can't always expect ships to be sinking with valuables aboard, or that people should be constantly building piers or bridges, or things of that kind. Consequently I wasn't making a fortune at the best of times, while at the worst of 'em I had sometimes to turn my hand to other jobs, such as shipping on board coasters or packet boats for a spell now and then.

'It was at one of these hard times that I had shipped aboard a small schooner that was bound for Liverpool. We were just passing that point there, with the tide against us, when we saw a great big steamer coming round the Bolt, as the point is called. They were keeping a mighty poor look-out on board that boat, for though when we saw she was coming straight down upon us we holloaed, and rung bells, they didn't take a bit of notice. Our skipper rammed the tiller hard a-port, hoping we should swing off and the steamer only graze our stern. But, unluckily, the wind fell dead all of a sudden, just for a minute or two, but quite long enough to settle our fate. The steamer struck the schooner full amidships, and cut her in half like so much cheese. I was knocked down by

the wreck of our foremast which broke my leg. I became insensible, but going down with the vessel, was brought to myself by the cold water, and contrived with difficulty to swim ashore.

'There was a pretty fair crowd collected by the time I reached land, and by somebody's orders a shutter was fetched, and I was carried to the nearest farmhouse, the very one that belongs to me now.

'My leg was set all right, but I took a fever, and was very bad for some time. The farmer was for sending me off to a hospital; but his daughter—that's my wife that is—begged of him not to do it. He was a widower, and she was his only child, so she generally got her way in most things. I wasn't sent away. By and by I got a bit better, and was able to creep about the house with a stick, or sit outside in the sun. The farmer was mostly out looking after his crops and his cattle, except at meal-times; so Polly and I saw a good deal of one another, and very naturally fell in love.

'It was a very pleasant time for a bit, before I got thoroughly strong and well. But as soon as I began to feel I was getting fit for work again, I began to long to be at it. I felt that I was in fact no better than a beggar, and I knew the farmer would be furious to think of my daring to make love to his child, who was reckoned the heiress as well as the beauty of the place.

'Polly was unreasonable, like women mostly are in such matters, and wouldn't hear of my going away. She laughed at the idea of my wishing to work again, and said she was sure her father, if he objected to our loving one another at first, would be safe to give in to her in the end.

'Well, unluckily she soon had an opportunity of finding out that she wasn't quite so powerful over her father as she thought.

'One afternoon the farmer came home unexpectedly to

fetch some medicine for one of the cows, that had been suddenly taken ill. Polly and I, never dreaming of such a chance, were on the settle by the fire—I with my arm round her waist, and she with her head on my shoulder. It was a very pretty picture, perhaps, for some of those illustrated papers, but I can tell you it didn't suit his taste anyhow.

'Well, there was a pretty row, I can assure you. The old man would have struck me but for Polly. He ordered me out of the house at once, as an ungrateful rogue and vagabond. Then Polly tried her powers of persuasion, for he wouldn't listen to a word from me. At first he wouldn't give much heed to her; but by degrees she got him calmer. At long and at last she got him to sit down and hear what I had to say.

'It wasn't very much beyond that I loved Polly. I could only say that I hoped I should get work, and save money, and that sort of thing. He laughed at the idea, "What could we live on if we married?" Polly jumped up and said she could and would work at needlework, or she'd go into service—anything; and then she burst out crying, and went into hysterics. That touched the old man a bit, and somehow or another, after a long time he consented to give me a twelvemonth's grace. If I could come back at the end of it with a prospect of earning a fair living, I might have Polly. But she declared that I shouldn't be fit to work for some months yet, and that the twelvemonth should begin from when I was well and strong. So her father said, "It's autumn now—I'll give him a twelvemonth from Christmas!" And with that he stalked out of the room, to give orders about the cow's medicine.

'Polly and I had a long consultation, and I persuaded her at last that the sooner I started the better was my chance of getting a good position. So she very unwillingly gave way to my going at once. So I packed up my few things in a handkerchief—my bag had been

the wreck of our foremast, which broke my leg ., at low insensible, but going down with the vessel, ket, which to myself by the cold water, and contrived y as a loan, to swim ashore.

'There was a pretty fair crowd o s I turned from I reached land, and by somebody's fetched, and I was carried to the rmer crustily, as he very one that belongs to me no it.

'My leg was set all right. er!" said I; and I strode very bad for some time. of hope and cheerfulness I off to a hospital; but b out of sight. Then all my pluck is—begged of him not along drearily enough till at length she was his only ch of gas-lamps, and knew I was in most things. I w more. better, and was monly hard and pitiless things the or sit outside found them. All that autumn I tried ing after b something by way of employment. But it so Polly I applied over and over again, but was naturall with the same remark—"We want a man 'It knowledge of the business," as if everybody thor begin at some time or other. Men can't be born fee knowledge of the business," or put it on ready- b like a livery.

'Every now and then I was obliged to go back to the old tailoring, and ship on board some vessel for a trip, just to get something to live on. How my heart used to ache, as the ship, dropping down the river, passed along by this ferry!

'In the spring I shipped on board a trader bound for Wales for copper ore. We had one passenger on board, a friend of the captain's. They were shareholders in several mines, and had done business together for years. The passenger—his name was Turton—was very rich, but very speculative. The captain used often to rate him for such gambling rashness, as he called it.

'"You'll sink all your money some of these days as

o as the doubloons in the ships over there," said he to
n, one day as we were sailing along the Cornish

t ships?—where?" said the other.
see those breakers yonder," said the captain,
mile to the windward of the southern point
y little island? That's called Galleon
said that a fleet of Spanish treasure-ships
there, to prevent their falling into the hands
nen-of-war that were after them."

"Has any of the money ever been found?" asked urton.

'"Yes, a few pieces now and then! There was a company started once—by some such speculative madcaps as you—but somehow or another it all came to nothing."

'"'Egad! I don't see why it shouldn't be done nowadays, with all our modern diving inventions."

'"Oh, if you're for diving," said the captain, "here's your man;" and he turned to me. I had come aft to relieve the man at the wheel. I was a bit of a favourite with the captain for steadiness and sobriety, and he had asked me questions, and I had told him who and what I was.

'"Are you a diver, my man?" said Turton.

'"I believe you—John Hurst is one of the best and most skilful divers we have," said the captain, who then called for another hand to take the wheel in my place.

'Turton asked me many questions, and often during the rest of the voyage would come to me and talk about the probabilities of recovering the treasure from the Spanish wrecks. He left us at Swansea, where we had to take in our cargo, after landing the freight we had brought out. In due time we returned to London, and my engagement being up I left the ship, and forgot all about Mr. Turton and the Spanish galleons.

'One day, however, as I happened to be passing across Tower Hill, I heard some one hailing me. I looked across the street, and saw it was my late captain. I went over to him, when he took out of his pocket a bit cut from the *Times*, containing an advertisement, in which I was requested to communicate at once with T. T. at his offices in Old Broad-street.

'"That's Tom Turton," said the captain; "he's going to fish for the treasure-ships. Lose no time in going to him. If he's fool enough to throw his money into the sea, you may as well get the benefit as any one else."

'I set off at once as he directed me. I saw Mr. Turton, who showed me the prospectus of a company which he had raised for the purpose of trying to recover the money in the lost treasure-ships. The adventurers were not many in point of numbers, he told me, but they were all wealthy, and like himself they delighted in speculation for its own sake. He wished me to report what would be required to set about the search with.

'In a few days I sent in what I estimated as necessary for the attempt. I proposed to begin in as economical a manner as possible, and with a small staff. A couple of divers would be sufficient to examine the reef, and see what truth there was in the report, and if it proved true to calculate what amount of money could be got out of the vessels. It would then be easy to send as many additional hands as necessary.

'Mr. Turton declared himself greatly pleased with my scheme, and offered me the command of the divers, with very good wages. He said that I should be accompanied by a diver on whose behalf one of the shareholders had applied to him for a post.

'He told me that, in order to carry on the exploration with as little delay and intermission as possible, they had rented the small island situated near the reef, and that

they would send out huts to be erected on it for us and the crew, and would forward at the same time an ample supply of all sorts of stores and necessaries.

'This all seemed very hopeful to me, and I began to think my chance had come at last. I wrote and told Polly so.

'I only discovered one drawback in the affair. It turned out that my partner was a diver of the name of Bleggs; a quarrelsome, ill-conditioned fellow, with not the best of characters. I felt it my duty to tell Mr. Turton thus much; but he said it couldn't be helped, for Bleggs's patron was one of the largest and most influential shareholders, and that he wanted Bleggs appointed to the post I had; and Bleggs would have had it but for Mr. Turton's tact and energy, and the respect the other adventurers felt for him.

'Bleggs knew this; for the first time we met he said something about my luck in having friends at court to get me above the heads of better men. "Well," he continued gruffly, "it's no odds. We shall see soon who does best for the company—skipper or man; and then, perhaps, a meddling secretary may get a wigging"—meaning Mr. Turton, who had been honorary secretary *pro tem.* I didn't wish in the interests of the adventure to quarrel with Bleggs; but I gave him to understand that I wouldn't have such language, and that once on Spanish Island, as our location was called, I should expect implicit obedience to orders.

'In due time the island was reached, the stores were landed, and the huts built. We had a good-sized steam-launch to take us out to the reef. She was fitted with two powerful air-pumps. Our diving-dresses were of the best and newest pattern. Everything looked well for success. The only thing that presented an obstacle was the frequent occurrence of bad weather. We could only take the launch among the rocks when the sea was pretty

smooth, and, indeed, could not have made a descent without great risk when it was very rough.

'Seizing every opportunity, I began the search. We were not long in discovering the remains of the wrecked ships. It was impossible to tell how many vessels there had been, for they had broken up and fallen to pieces, and the winter storms had spread dire havoc among them. Only one hulk, which lay comparatively sheltered between two perpendicular walls of rock, retained any semblance of a ship.

'We explored the ocean-bed carefully. I meant to examine the hulk first, but in a weak moment allowed myself to be dissuaded by Bleggs, who urged that, as what we wanted was to learn as quickly as possible if there was gold, we had better examine the ships which the sea had broken up for us, and so save ourselves the trouble of breaking up the hulk.

'The work was exhausting and fatiguing, and I found to my chagrin that Bleggs surpassed me in strength and endurance. My illness had shaken my constitution, and I suffered very severely from pain in the leg that had been fractured; but I made up my mind to persevere and do my best.

'So far our search had been unsuccessful. At last I observed something that made me suspect that Bleggs was playing me tricks. Happening to make my descent after him somewhat more rapidly than usual, I found him emerging from the hulk. He assured me afterwards that he had only gone there for mussels, of which he was very fond, and which were very fine on the hulk.

'A day or two afterwards—Bleggs having meantime obtained leave to "go ashore," as we called visiting the mainland—I observed that a man was constantly hanging about the reef fishing in an open boat. It was not a very good fishing-ground, and it was some distance from shore for an open boat; but I noticed that this stranger always

remained at his moorings till after dark. He was not very communicative—indeed he growled at our manœuvres, saying that we drove the fish away. At the same time I discovered that he was not a native, for he did not speak the local dialect, but what, for want of a better definition, I may call London-English.

'My suspicions were aroused at last, when turning round suddenly one day while we were preparing to descend, I saw Bleggs signaling to the solitary fisherman. I said nothing, but determined to investigate without delay.

'All that night I lay awake thinking over this matter. I rose in the morning with a matured plan. When Bleggs and I had finished our midday meal, which was cooked on board the boat, I ordered him to take off his diving-dress, and go to the mainland to fetch some paper, under the pretence that I had none in store and must write my report to Mr. Turton that night. Bleggs did not seem to like the idea, but he was obliged to go. I sent one of the crew with him in our small punt; and as soon as I saw him disappear behind the island I jumped overboard to prosecute my search.

'I made my way to the hulk, and entered it. A very short survey sufficed to show me that it had been visited, and that the contents of its hold had been recently disturbed. Making my way down, I was speedily engaged in clearing the sand and weed, beneath which I soon came upon some large wooden cases, so rotted and decayed that a very few blows of my axe shivered the lid of one, and revealed the contents.

'There lay masses of what, in spite of their being so oxidised and, as it were, fused together by the action of the salt water, I could see were gold and silver coins. The sight at first surprised and delighted me; then came an access of rage at the treachery of Bleggs, who had, it was clear, concealed this treasure from me, and was

evidently helping himself to the contents of the chest—somehow, though how I knew not.

'I began to search the hold narrowly for some trace of the manner in which he removed the coin. In a remote corner I came on a bundle of raw hide, and several coils of thin but strong line. Beside these lay a knife which I identified as his, and therefore took possession of as a bit of evidence against him. Then I ascended to the deck again, and looked about me. I could see a place where the bulwarks had evidently been cut away quite lately, and beyond it in the sand, which had drifted up almost level with the deck, I could see a trail as if heavy bodies had been dragged along. I followed it, and was guided to a nook in the upright wall of rock, wherein I found two large packages, consisting of raw hide, and evidently full of coins. A line was attached to them. I followed it with my eye as it went up—up towards the surface of the water, as far as I could see. I was just about to pull it, in order to discover whether it was attached to some floating buoy, when I made out through the dim green haze of heaving water a dark object, which I immediately guessed was the boat of the uncommunicative fisherman.

'Well might that morose personage cast line after line into the sea if this was the sort of catches he made! I saw at once why he stayed out until it grew dark. It was to haul in his prize unobserved. I determined he should have his labour for nothing this once, at any rate. I would tie his lines to a mass of rock, and let him pull that up! I should want some cord for this purpose, and remembering the coil in the hold of the vessel, I went back to seek it.

'While I was groping my way in the hold I felt a sudden jerk at my signal-line, which, as you are aware, is attached round a diver's waist. I supposed it must have caught on some projection on the wreck. The next minute I found it must have broken, for it hung loose.

'As I put my hand behind me to the knot of the signal-line to make sure that this was the case, I experienced a violent push from behind, which flung me down on my face. Before I could recover myself, or even wonder what was amiss, I felt my hands caught in a slip-noose, drawn forcibly together behind, and bound fast by the wrists.

'By this time I had guessed who my assailant was. Bleggs had managed somehow to return very much sooner than he should have done, and had come down and surprised me.

'As soon as he had finished tying my hands, he turned me over on my back, and putting his foot on my chest stood looking at me for a minute or two. Even at that moment it struck me how strange we must look—one man looking at the other with triumph and hatred—the other gazing at him in alarm and anxiety, but the countenance of each hidden from the other by the strange expressionless diving helmets.

'He raised me to my feet, when a violent struggle ensued. But he was my master, I was powerless with my hands bound; so he forced me back against an upright support, and lashed me to it.

'I felt a sense of relief, for I knew that, although he had cut my signal-rope, my staying down long after he ascended would alarm the men in our boat, and some means would have to be taken to free me. There were one or two men among the crew who could dive a little, and there were two spare dresses on the island, in case of accidents.

'But I had miscalculated my enemy's malice. You may have observed in a diver's helmet two little brass discs, perforated like the rose of a watering-pot. One of these is constantly in use allowing the superfluous or vitiated air to escape. The second is for use in case of the other being clogged or damaged. Both are so arranged

that on being turned half-round they are closed, and shut in the air, whereupon the diver becomes so buoyant that he rises at once to the surface.

'Bleggs came up to me, made a mocking bow as if to take farewell—and then closed both the escape-valves of my helmet. All the horror of my situation flashed on me! He intended to murder me. With every stroke of the air-pump would come a greater pressure of air, which by its increasing weight would kill me after the most awful tortures.

'Before I had recovered from the shock, Bleggs had disappeared, and already the strokes of the air-pump seemed to beat on my brain like sledgehammers. I writhed and twisted, and tore at my fastenings with the strength of a desperate and the fury of a mad man. The agony became intense. All of a sudden I felt that I held some hard substance in my hand. It was the knife I had picked up. I had instinctively gripped it hard, even in my

was able to turn on my regular escape-valve and breathe with comparative freedom.

'In a few moments I had gained the deck, and, closing the valve, was rapidly borne to the surface. I came up

just under the quarter, and as I laid my hand on the rope-ladder to climb up the side I heard Bleggs's voice,

'"Governor's a long time down. Something queer there; wouldn't let me stay down—signalled me to go

up at once. Found the swag p'rhaps, and wants it for himself! I wonder when he means coming up?"

'"Now!" said I, climbing up, and showing myself over the bulwarks. Bleggs fell back as if he had been shot.

'"Seize him and bind him hand and foot!" said I to the men, who obeyed me with some wonder, and not very readily. Luckily he was too surprised to resist. When I told the story of his villany the crew were for throwing him overboard, then and there; but this I positively forbade.

'At this moment, looking in the direction of our fisher friend, I saw him preparing to slip his cable and make for shore. I immediately ordered three of the crew into the boat to give chase. They caught him after a smart race.

'To make a long story short, we traced the stolen treasure to this man's hut on the opposite side of the island to ours, and he and Bleggs were taken before the nearest magistrate, and the whole case laid before him.

'Then I learnt the manner of Bleggs's rapid return. Apparently guessing my suspicions, he had gone to the island instead of the mainland—had broken into the stores, and found the paper. This he showed to the man who was with him, saying he fancied he had seen some, and that I must have overlooked it, and so of course there was no need to go on shore.

'The magistrate discharged Bleggs's accomplice. The treasure-ships were not our property, and the man was not in our employ, so there was no case against him.

'But with Bleggs it was quite another affair, said the justice; though it was unnecessary to go into that part of the question, as he should commit him for trial on the charge of attempting to murder.

'As he said this my overpent feelings gave way, and turning round giddily as if in search of support, I fell all in a heap on the floor.

'From that time there was a long blank until I came

to myself, and found I was lying in a bed, attended by a nurse, who seemed very glad to find I was sensible—as well she might, poor woman, for I had been raging with brain-fever. But I was forbidden to talk, and, indeed, scarcely cared to do so, I was so weak.

'My recovery was very, very slow. At last, when I was strong enough, they told me that I had been laid up for a long time, during which my enemy had been kept in prison, until, growing weary of confinement, he had confessed all to Mr. Turton, and being allowed to plead guilty, had been transported.

'I asked what time of the year it was, for I saw through my bedroom window that the branches of the trees were bare. I was told it was October.

'Then came back to me the bitter thought that the year was nearly run out, and I was as badly off as at the commencement of it. I saw I had lost all chance of winning Polly. Nay, my long silence might have led her to think me faithless.

'The worry and disappointment brought on a relapse, and for another month I lay at death's door, and was another three weeks ere I could muster strength to rise from my bed.

'Then I wrote to Mr. Turton to ask him for the wages that were due at the time of my illness, and to thank him for his kindness in providing me, as I learnt he had done, with nursing and medical attendance.

'In a couple of days I received a letter from him, enclosing me a cheque for a thousand pounds, with the thanks of the company for my fidelity and vigilance in their interests. They had raised an immense quantity of treasure.

'I need hardly say how grateful I was, or how soon I gained health and strength then. I made my way up to town as soon as I could, and went straight to Polly.

'It was the day before Christmas-day, and she was

putting up the holly. I saw her through the window, so I slipped in quietly by the back door, and crept up and caught her in my arms. It was a foolish trick, for she just gave me one look, and then fainted dead off.

'But no harm came of it, and—well, sir, the thousand pounds satisfied the farmer, and we were married. And a better wife a man couldn't have.'

That was the end of the diver's story.

Drawn by Linley Sambourne.]

SUGGESTIONS FOR A CHRISTMAS-DAY COSTUME.

A CHRISTMAS TREE PARTY.

'MR. and Mrs. West request the pleasure of Captain and Mrs. Keating and family's company on Tuesday, the 6th of January, at 9 P.M.'

Such, headed by a most elaborate monogram, were the contents of a scented cream-coloured note which I extracted from the post-bag one morning in December, and which my wife read aloud to all assembled at the breakfast table. Our county is not famous for sociability; so the excitement of my family on the contents of the note being generally known was immense. Opinions were strongly divided as to the nature of the proposed amusement; every form of evening entertainment, from a fancy ball to a tea-party in which weak tea and weaker conversation would be dispensed *ad libitum* to the guests, being successively discussed and successively rejected. With an inward shudder at the thought of driving five Irish miles and back on a winter's night, on the *chance* of receiving a cup of weak tea, and the *certainty* of influenza, I proposed that the invitation should be refused with thanks. This counsel, which was certainly wise, was received with such strong marks of disapprobation by the younger members of the family, and created such a cry of dismay, that at last, though not without strong misgivings, I consented to be sacrificed, a most reluctant victim, at the shrine of Pleasure. My consent, however, was qualified. Under no circumstances would I accompany my children to a tea-party *pur et simple*. Unless the object of the evening assemblage was thoroughly well defined, and promised to

repay the exertion of a winter night's drive, I would not rashly promise to be of the party.

The subject of dress was next rather prematurely brought on the *tapis* by the ladies of the family. My eldest daughter, who had firmly settled in her own mind (the wish, we all know, is father to the thought), against all probabilities, that the affair would turn out to be a fancy ball, insisted that I should appear as a Zulu chief—blankets and a coronet of feathers being of that simple nature easily to be procured, even in a remote country place, and being certain to produce a unique and picturesque effect. My youngest child, Adolphus, a precocious boy of four, and, I need hardly say, his mother's darling, having conceived the idea that the party was to be composed of youths of his own age, at once proclaimed that he intended to go, very much to his elders' disgust.

It was finally determined that I should try and solve the great problems of the nature of the entertainment, and of the required dress, by riding over to Abbeyvale, my friends the Wests' residence, and judiciously there angle for the desired information. This project I carried into effect that very afternoon. On my arrival at the imposing red-brick Elizabethan mansion, which, enthroned on its double row of terraces, glowed 'celestial rosy red' in the rays of the descending sun, I could not refrain an involuntary shudder at the possible prospect of ascending those same terraces in a snow-storm, with inverted umbrella. However, the weather was at present so mild that, after all, the dreaded catastrophe *might* not occur, although buds at Christmas are well known to be the most delusive of hypocrites in their promises. Balancing thus, in my own mind, the weather probabilities, I rang at the glass door. A tall individual in very gorgeous cherry-coloured shorts, and calves specially fattened up for the Christmas festivities, very soon admitted me into the *sanctorum* of Mrs. West, where I found the eldest daughter of the house

busily engaged at some feminine handiwork of that utter uselessness which characterises articles at bazaars and Christmas trees in the aggregate. At once grasping at the idea, by a happy impulse, I exclaimed, blandly smiling, 'O Miss West, how very kind it is of you to think of giving a Christmas tree!' Had a bombshell suddenly exploded at her feet, my young friend could not have been more startled, and, losing her presence of mind, acknowledged the fact. I was then called upon to admire some many-coloured paper flowers, which I was informed were 'Parisian roses,' and which were, in truth, miracles of art. Mrs. West here entered, and on finding that I was possessed of the secret, proceeded to dilate at great length on the programme of the intended festivities on the 6th; and I was not sorry to find that some handsome as well as useful articles were to be included among the presents. Not that I hoped to become the happy owner of any of them, when I heard that the articles were to be ticketed and drawn for by corresponding numbers from a bag—my luck in such affairs generally consisting in finding myself the possessor of a shrivelled apple or an elderly orange. But I am a father, and rejoiced at the prospect of my luckier children providing themselves with valuables gratis, to say nothing of the addenda of a promised champagne supper, in which my friend West's clever *chef* would cover himself with glory, I felt convinced.

Having thus successfully accomplished my mission, at least in my own estimation, I made my way homewards. My eldest daughter was, I think, a little put out at having to relinquish her favourite idea of a fancy ball; but any disappointment she may have felt was as nothing compared to the immense joy and triumph of Adolphus at hearing that he had been specially invited by Mrs. West. We were all bound to go; and, need I say, to amuse ourselves, as a matter of course.

As the eventful day drew near, we were kept in great

suspense by the barometer. The mercury having suddenly fallen to 'change,' did not seem to relish its position there, but fell lower and lower, and was guilty of eccentricities innumerable. On the morning of the 5th, our uncertainties were put an end to by awakening to find the country covered with a white tablecloth of snow, and more softly, but most determinately, falling.

But it is well to take a cheery view of matters; at least so seemed to think the younger members of my family, who assured me at breakfast that snow was just the one thing that was wanting to complete the success of a Christmas party; more especially as fireworks, which, got up regardless of expense, were to form part of the programme of the evening's amusement, are never seen to such advantage as in snowy weather. 'Perhaps,' I remarked dubiously; 'but there might be such a thing as being snowed up on our way to Abbeyvale—or our drive there might be pleasingly diversified by missing the road, and finding a boghole.' The road to Abbeyvale, I must premise, ran through a bog, and was perfectly unprotected by any fence from the deep dykes by which it was bordered; and you may conceive, my reader, that there would be at least excitement in driving over such a road on a night when snow would render bog, road, and dykes one undistinguishable mass.

However, there were still some thirty hours for the snow to cease, and summer weather to begin, and the latter contingency the young people seemed to think highly probable. On the morning of the 6th, my children were obliged to confess that summer had not come; in fact, the thermometer was nearly at zero, the cold intense, and the wind, which had risen, whirled the snow into drifts which to my mind presented rather a problem for wheels. The proposition of my second son, the mechanical genius of the family, that our closed carriage, a new one fresh from London, should be taken off its wheels and

placed on hastily extemporised runners, I at once sternly negatived; and heartily congratulated myself on having, the moment the thermometer indicated frost, ordered post-horses from the neighbouring town, in spite of the remonstrances of my wife, who was very severe on the fact that our own horses were never available when work was to be done.

All that day the snow fell unweariedly, uninterruptedly —all, even the most sanguine, hopes of a clearing were shattered to pieces when dusk came on, and found the snow as busy as ever. I tried to reconcile my children to their inevitable disappointment, as even the most zealous of Irish post-horse keepers would hardly, I imagined, send his horses out on such a night. For my own part, I must confess that secret joy welled unbidden in my heart, and that a feeling of relief predominated at the prospect of the almost unexpected release from the, to me, very problematical pleasures attending a drive through a snow-drift. At seven P.M. (dinner having been earlier than usual that we might be prepared for all eventualities) I ensconced myself in a thoroughly comfortable arm-chair, heightened my reading-lamp, and set myself to enjoy the last number of *London Society*, in the cheery company of a blazing fire.

Imagine my feelings, sympathetic reader, if you can, at my visions of comfort being rudely dispelled in about five minutes by my second son's rushing, in that dreadfully impetuous way natural to schoolboys, into the room, and loudly proclaiming that the 'horses had come, and I must at *once* go and dress.' Apparently, though thunderstruck with dismay, I submitted in silence, and having dismissed my son to his toilet, and thus got *him* out of the way, I descended to the lower regions, for a surreptitious colloquy with the postboy, on the state of the roads. 'By dad thin, yer honour, they're jist as slippy as *grace*, and the ice bates Banagher,' was not very consolatory, the more so as I could not get him to say they were

positively impracticable. A '*gossoon*' runner, with a lantern, was necessary, it appeared, to accompany us, however, and we were to trust unlimitedly to our good star. Very gloomy I went to dress—but it was an inexorable necessity. I should have been considered a monster of unkindness had I not been willing to immolate myself for my family's sake. Behold us then packed tightly in and on the carriage, under the care of Paddy the postillion, who I fervently *hoped* was sober; but his attitudes on horseback were, to say the least, suspicious. Our approach was confessedly 'a mighty dangerous place' (indeed, it was one of the steepest hills in the country); therefore the assistance of all our retainers (including the cook, who appeared on the scene with an armful of shoes to be thrown consecutively after us 'for luck') was called into requisition. Amidst a perfect Babel of advices, consolations, exhortations, shrieks, cursings, and blessings, and the ecstatic delight of the children, we finally reached the gate in safety, plunged triumphantly through a snowdrift there, and found ourselves on the public road. The ever vigilant eyes of my children at once discovered the fact that vehicles (*they* said *carriages*—I suppose *carts*) had recently passed and trodden a path for us. This, could it be considered as certain that the vehicles were *carriages*, would have dispelled one of the objects of my deep solicitude, namely, that on our arrival we should find ourselves the only guests at the Wests' hospitable mansion. Slow, and I am happy to be able to add sure, became meanwhile our motto. Progression at a pace quicker than a walk was mostly impracticable; but somehow or other we managed to surmount all difficulties, and in spite of various stoppages, finally got to Abbeyvale in safety. We were agreeably surprised to find, on our arrival there, that an elaborate covered way extended from the house to the gravel sweep, and very pretty was the vista that burst on our eyes as our carriage drew up. Greenhouse plants

and flowering shrubs of every variety, decorated by different coloured lamps, formed banks on each side of the crimson-carpeted footway; while from the arched roof flags of many colours depended, decorated with Christmas devices. Within, the enormous yule-logs blazing in both the fireplaces of the entrance-hall formed a pleasing contrast to the cold out of doors. Here we were greeted by our jovial host, who had stationed himself there to receive the arriving guests with a hearty welcome.

Having unswathed ourselves in an adjoining room, decorated with holly and ivy, we were ushered into the morning-room, where Mrs. West, in all her bravery, stood, surrounded by all her guests. I felt, as I stood there, contemplating the many county families collected before me, that from henceforth my children could and would sing a never-ending song of triumph over the non-fulfilment of my prophecies of deserted rooms. In the mean while, the greetings over, we were all expectation for the grand climax. It came at last, when, finally—the intervening time being got through by the aid of tea, coffee, cakes, the meteorological observations so precious for conversational purposes, and the discussion of county affairs—the folding-doors between the room in which we were assembled and the drawing-room were thrown back, and the Christmas tree in all its glory burst upon us, and became at once the cynosure of all eyes. It was a stately silver fir, some sixteen or seventeen feet high; innumerable tapers of various colours illuminated the feathery branches, dependent from which hung the chief objects of attraction in the children's eyes—namely, presents in endless variety.

And here, perhaps, I may digress a little for the benefit of those future givers of Christmas-tree parties, who imagine that the mere sight of a decorated fir-tree ought to furnish quite sufficient gratification to the elders of the party, and that fathers and mothers of families are

quite beyond the pale of receiving gifts. Could those benighted persons have but seen the intense gratification that suffused itself over the faces of the parents present—not called forth by the vision of the tree in its large decorated tub, and the dolls and playthings floating from the branches, but at the sight of handsome presents of which they were to be the recipients—they would soon discover their error. Apples and oranges may be very nice things in their own way, but the digestive powers of their eaters require to be in their second or third lustre when any pleasure is to be derived from discussing them. In this case things were so arranged that *all* received a lasting memento of the evening; and this judicious plan I strongly recommend to the consideration of all future Christmas-tree givers.

After some time had been spent in admiring the tree and its rich harvest of presents, our host commenced business by handing about a bag full of tickets, each of which bore a number corresponding with that on some present on the tree. And now commenced the exciting part of the evening's amusements. Lost in conjecture as to what it would fall to my fate to receive, I cast a scrutinising glance at the tree. Could I be doomed—terrible thought! —to become the unhappy possessor of one of those scarcely decently-clothed gutta-percha babies, which it almost made me blush to see even a glimpse of, instead of a handsome inkstand on which I had set my heart? I am not lucky, and consequently was pretty sure to draw an unfortunate number. A happy inspiration seized me—I cruised round the tree on a voyage of discovery, to find out the number on my cherished inkstand. It was 66, and 66, sure enough, I discovered in the possession of a little child near me, in the costume so happily described by a writer of the present day as consisting of 'bare legs, bustle, and cock-tailed petticoats.' By judicious bribery, I succeeded in persuading him to exchange tickets, and then, at peace in

my own mind, I calmly awaited my turn in the distribution of prizes, which occupied some time, as each recipient who considered himself unfortunate in the article received had many plausible excuses for endeavouring to effect an exchange; and I am sorry to say that one little child, who became the owner of an envied toy, was at once assaulted by an unruly cherub, and the coveted prize was obtained after a sharp passage-at-arms, in the course of which shattered relics were left on the battle-field.

At last 66 was called, and I stepped forward: *not*, however, to receive my cherished inkstand, with its endless conveniences for a study-table, but a hideous china monster, who nodded his head mockingly at me, as he was placed in my extended hand. The shock was terrible, and I at once objected to the leering member of the 'celestial' empire. Alas, in vain! The number on the inkstand was 99, and in my hurried progress round the tree I had not perceived that I only saw it in its *inverted* shape of 66. This was a terrible consummation to my fondly-cherished and, as I had thought, also well-grounded hopes; but there was no resource, and I was obliged to acquiesce; and I had the pang of seeing the inkstand and its belongings inexorably handed over to a stern matron, who was quite too evidently a utilitarian to be cajoled by any amount of 'soft sawder' to exchange it for a useless mandarin. My children had been more fortunate in obtaining the objects of their desires; Adolphus, in particular, revelled in the possession of a long-wished-for, terribly noisy drum, which I, however, privately, in my own mind, doomed to destruction on the first favourable opportunity. Much amusement was afforded by the incongruity of some of the presents to their recipients: thus the bishop of the diocese, who was present, and whose youthful deeds of prowess on the moor and by the river-side still furnish a fruitful topic for reminiscences and anecdote by the peasant's fireside, received a miniature fowling-piece; and Count G——, a

German visitor to our county, whose long dishevelled locks hung wildly over his shoulders, received a 'pocket-comb and scissors,' all in one. My well-turned congratulations to my foreign friend on the possession of such useful toilet articles were still on my lips when we were summoned to witness the acting of some charades in an adjoining room, which was turned into an extemporised theatre for the occasion. Three words were acted with far above average amateur skill, but, as usual, were not all guessed by the audience; after which the sounds of a gong proclaimed the fact that supper was the next stage of the proceedings. The difficult operation of marshalling so large a company being at length concluded, we all progressed through the intervening apartments to the dining-room. There, on the tables where the supper was laid out, the delicate frosted-silver foliage of the centre-pieces and épergnes vied with richly-tinted natural leaves of the exotics from the stoves and greenhouses. The eye of the epicure could also dwell with pleasure upon the various *chefs-d'œuvre* of culinary art produced by my friend West's clever *chef*, which I was happy to perceive appeared to be thoroughly appreciated by an elderly gentleman, who, after hovering around the tables, glass in eye, for some time, beaming with delight, finally settled himself for good opposite a *pâté de foie gras*, which promised to repay his cautious foresight. For my own part, I found myself seated between two ladies, who took vastly different views of the whole evening's proceedings. While my friend on the left saw everything through rose-coloured glasses, and was delighted alike with the journey through the snow—'a most picturesque drive, which reminded her of happy days in Russia'—and the handsome ring she had received from the tree, my neighbour on the right objected, on principle, to night drives in winter, and thoroughly reprobated the 'useless extravagance' displayed in the Christmas-tree presents; and, sorest point

of all, dwelt with withering sarcasm on Mrs. West's utter incapability for learning the proper precedency of her guests.

The supper was progressing towards its termination, when I was informed by a friend that it had been determined that a speech of thanks should be made to our host, for his handsome entertainment, on the part of the children, and that the onerous office had been unanimously given to me. Not being the least ambitious either of oratorical failures or successes, I begged to refuse the proffered honour, but finally yielded to the solicitations of my friend. The auspicious moment for expressing the infants' gratitude for benefits received appeared to have arrived when a cessation of the clatter of knives and plates, accompanied by a lull in conversation, announced that the pangs of nature had been for the present satisfied, and I rose to my feet, but only to find myself confronted by my stout elderly friend in front of the remains of the *pâté de foie gras*, who had apparently found the supper such a success in a culinary point of view that he wished to place on record his gratitude to the donor. I at once gave way in favour of my friend opposite, who, after touching rather incoherently on various topics, at last allowed his feelings so entirely to overwhelm him that he became quite unintelligible, and subsided into his seat again amidst mingled cheers of laughter and derision. The speechifying was then brought to an abrupt conclusion by a notice that the fireworks were in progress, and the company adjourned to the drawing-room to see this the last stage of the evening's amusement.

For the next half-hour rockets, Catherine-wheels, &c., delighted the beholders. At last a magnificent bouquet of many-coloured lights brought the pyrotechnic display to a close, and carriages began to be thought of. The difficult task of collecting my scattered flock of children now remained. As soon as I captured one, the rest eluded my

grasp, and I began thoroughly to realise the truth of a saying frequently used by an old domestic servant of my own—namely, that it required the 'patience of Job, the strength of Samson, and the wisdom of Solomon' combined to cope satisfactorily with children when their youthful

minds are bent on the accomplishment of some desired project. At length, as other parents on the same errand collected and drew off their children, my task became easier; and Adolphus, the last of the missing ones, was finally victoriously driven from his ambush behind a cur-

tain, just in time to prevent a private pyrotechnic display of his own, in which he was assisted by a kindred spirit, and to which the curtain would probably have fallen a victim. When we reached the entrance-hall, we found it filled by the departing guests in every variety of costume that could be supposed equal to all possible weather emergencies. Conspicuous among the crowd my neighbour at the supper-table appeared in a very striking Russian costume of furs, whose history she was relating in a very prolix way to Count G——, who, shivering before her in the thinnest of paletots, seemed fully to realise her remarks on the severity of the weather.

But what stops the outward stream of departing guests? Voices, too, in noisy vituperation, reach the ear; our host descends to ascertain the cause, and shortly returns, hot and excited, and requests me to use my influence with *my* servants, who, he informs me, are the cause of the disturbance. I hastened to the door, and the first object that met my horror-stricken gaze was the figure of our postillion, who stood, the lantern in his hand dimly burning and all awry, smiling blandly at me as I advanced towards him. A glance satisfied me as to *his* condition. His coadjutor, 'the gossoon,' whom he had insisted on bringing (considerably to my dissatisfaction), had, it appeared, marked out, opposite the door, a sacred ring, into which no carriage was to intrude, and was busily employed in personally opposing the approach of all vehicles with a blackthorn stick. On further investigation I failed to descry our carriage, and requested an explanation from some of the other servants. It appeared that our precious retainers had met some convivial spirits in the public-house of the adjoining village to which they had betaken themselves, and were only returning from the scene of their dissipation, when, seeing lights and people, they had instinctively made their way to the crowd, their bewildered faculties causing them to imagine that a wake, or

some such festive scene, was in progress, at which they felt themselves preëminently called upon to assist. As I turned to reënter the house, I had the satisfaction of seeing 'gossoon' suddenly seized from behind by some of the Wests' people, and carried forcibly off the scene, while Paddy, the postillion, followed, feebly serpentining along. This was a pleasant position in which to find oneself, and I had to throw myself on the good nature of our host: if he could supply the places of our two incompetent drinkers by even one sober man, all might yet be well. This, happily, was easily accomplished; our posters, not being inebriated, were still available, and we departed, hoping our misfortunes had come to an end.

Vain expectation! After passing the approach-gates, we were left to our own resources for pioneering a road over the untrodden snow. For the first mile we proceeded without accident, and I was sinking into the repose that I felt I so well deserved, when, in descending Ballinagrattishcarnahey Hill, before reaching the bog, a sudden lurch forward, a plunge, a struggle, announced that one of the horses was down, and my visions of dreamland were suddenly dispersed. My eldest son had to descend from the box, and I from the interior of the carriage, however unwillingly, to the rescue, to the great detriment both of our tempers and dress-boots, and with infinite trouble to raise the animal on his legs again, who was fortunately, as our driver remarked, 'not a haporth the worse of his tumble.' Placing our trust in Providence, we commenced our journey afresh. The four or five consecutive hours' snow while we were at Abbeyvale had, of course, effectually removed all our former tracks on the unfrequented road, and crossing the bog, where not a bush or tree was to be seen to mark our way, was perilous in the extreme. At last we came to a dead stop, and the driver requested to know if we were on the right road. A dreadful suspicion came into my mind. About half-way

across the bog our road home diverged at an angle from the main road, and on questioning the driver, we found that the turn had too evidently not been taken, and that we had been, for the last hour, progressing in an entirely wrong direction. There was nothing for it but to retrace our steps; and it was with the deepest feelings of gratitude that we at last found ourselves, at 5 A.M., on our own steps, intensely cold, certainly, but never did home appear so attractive. We had been almost given up for lost, and were just in time to stop a party that was about starting to rescue us from the perils of the bog, in which we were supposed to have been engulfed.

We found, subsequently, that our adventures returning home sank into insignificance compared with those of some of the other guests. Count G——, in particular told me that to his dying day he should never forget the ditch in which he miserably spent some hours (until rescued by some Irish natives) on the morning he returned home from the Abbeyvale Christmas tree.

A SHY MAN'S DIFFICULTIES.

BY PERCY FITZGERALD.

I.

THE name that came with me into the world is Blusherly. The name which I received contemporaneously with the universal Christian rite was Charles Alfred. The three united, it will be perceived, run off euphoniously as Charles Alfred Blusherly. For the last the law alone is accountable, which exacts that all children shall bear the name of their sires. The two former are to be set to the account of the then humour of my parents.

No doubt it will be assumed that here is some free, fearless, and even reckless nature—a wild boisterous temperament, indiscreet it may be, but bold and eager, difficult to be restrained, and riding rough-shod over all obstacles.

Ah, me! riding rough-shod, indeed! It were well if it came to riding smooth-shod—or, indeed, riding at all. Am I not a shy man? and we shy men are brave enough on paper. The gay rollicking key in which the overture to this piece is pitched is no more than a poor sham, a hollow mockery, a sad make-believe. I am not free, nor rollicksome, nor frolicksome; I am miserably hopelessly shy—consumed by that affection as by a disease.

In Goldsmith's play, Marlow, it will be recollected, in his interview with Miss Hardcastle, professed himself too coy to enter into any of the easy familiarities fashionable with gentlemen of his time. So acutely do I suffer from this horrid malady that, though well brought up and of severe morals, I am at times inclined to envy my less strait-laced and erring brethren in the practice of *such* easy familiarities at inns and other places. Repentant afterwards, I do for the moment admire the cool and smooth effrontery with which they can be affectionately rude to persons in that meaner order of life. I hope I shall not be misunderstood here, or thought to be sanctioning a course of practice highly free and reprehensible. I admire the power, but must at the same time turn away my eyes and condemn.

With me this weakness is, in a manner, constitutional; and betrays itself in mixed companies by violent flushings and conspicuous disorder and distress on being called, even unintentionally, into any notoriety—a sight, I am informed by friendly beholders, quite painful to those sitting or standing by. It must indeed be alarming for a large company, pleasantly diverting itself harmlessly with light and indifferent topics, of a sudden to find a member of their society all blazing and flaming like an Italian sunset, and on the verge of strangulation from the sudden tightening of his necktie. I feel that this phenomenon must naturally check the easy flow of conversation, and entail a needless publicity on the innocent. What I have suffered

in this way, and the many times I have writhed in this agony, will not be known until the day of grand accounting—if, indeed, there is to be a balance struck of *that* species of suffering.

Once there lived a maid, and the name of the maid was Blowzier—Mary Blowzier; of Huguenot extraction—so I was told—and living down on the Thames at Tomata Villa. My father had known Mary Blowzier—my aunt had been admitted to intermarry in the halls of Blowzier *père*, and had quaffed the cup of joy on festive occasions. It had been a pleasant speculation in the bosom of our family to lay out an alliance between the houses of Blowzier and Blusherly—to make me, the unconscious Charles Alfred, take her, Mary Blowzier, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold, &c., according to the formula. They even went further, and, by a bold poetic license, would raise up heirs male of the body for the combined house of Blusherly-Blowzier, and carve out for them prematurely other distinguished alliances. It was agreed, however, that when Charles Alfred came home, he should be forthwith equipped handsomely, like the young Gascons in M. Dumas' tales setting out for Paris; and, dismissed with my father's blessing, should make, not for Paris, but for Tomato Villa on the Thames. Alone I was to do it; alone I was to win the prize gloriously; alone I was to fail.

It was a lovely summer day when I set forth. The sun was high in the heavens, and I glistened in its rays in a suit of bright new raiment. I was at the station at twelve o'clock of this summer's day, waiting for the train, which set forth at half-past twelve precisely; and yet, bright and encouraging as was the day—though, without undue exaggeration of phrase, all Nature might be said to be smiling—I, Blusherly, the subject of this memoir, was in a horrible state of mind—literally, *sans phrase*, in a horrible state of mind. I have sat at a species of public entertainment where an electro-biological operator has drawn

all eyes on me, and made me feel faint and giddy by an invitation to walk up on the platform. Yet this was worse. I have waited in the dentist's parlour; I have present to my mind the moment when the door is thrown gently open, and the dentist's menial announces that by special favour he will let me be tortured first. Yet this was worse. Presenting myself on a platform to a derisive populace, or being led away to regions of pincers and screws and levers and files and cotton and perforated delph, is a horrible position for a human being; yet not so horrible as plunging without support, moral or physical, into the bosom of a strange family. I was about to plunge without support into the bosom of a strange family. I had passed a fearful night—full of nightmares, startings, and convulsive tremors. But to my story.

I carefully selected a carriage that was a perfect void, and likely to remain a void. I love privacy in these railway journeys. And the better to secure the carriage I had selected continuing a void, I artfully walked up and down the platform *without* taking my place, but keeping my eye carefully upon it. Let me not be misunderstood; nor let any prevarication be suspected here. I *had* taken my place, so far as securing it by a deposit of an umbrella may be said to amount to the taking of a place. No one came. The bell sounded; and with feelings of secret satisfaction I *mounted*, as the French say, and sat down secure in a first-class solitude.

Suddenly I heard a shuffle and pattering as of feet; and a flock of scared ladies, with some gentlemen, flew past the window laughing and simpering, and indeed all but late. They were seeking places, and could find none, and passed again amid the impatient and stimulating cries of porters and guards, infuriated by the delay. A miserable dependent of the establishment, thrusting his coarse face in at my window, sees that there is room; and throwing open the door puts the whole party—three ladies and

two gentlemen—that is to say, three enormous masses of inflated summer muslins, rustling and fluttering, and filling up the whole carriage—an unpardonable, an unwarrantable intrusion, which filled me with confusion and alarm.

The situation was really serious. I was alone, and thus really imprisoned with these strangers, who were clearly of a lawless wanton temperament—the ladies especially—and would respect nothing, either human or divine. I saw *that* at a glance; and if there *be* a thing of which I stand in awe in this whole world, it is a female of a lively and scoffing temperament. Here were three females of lively and scoffing temperament—three females in boisterous and unfeminine spirits, hounded on, if I may so phrase it, by the applause of their two servile male companions. In an instant I saw that I was at their mercy, and that when there came a dearth of subjects on which to spend their powers of ridicule, I should be the next victim selected.

We flew along through the green fields, with the sun still shining placidly; and still the unseemly merriment went forward. I had purchased a bright yellow volume of *Railway Reading*, with which I affected to be wholly absorbed, but which to this moment, if duly empanelled on oath, I could not name the title. It was a wretched blind; and by its agency I heard all their talk—such sarcasm, such scourging from one damsel especially of robust health and really fair to look on, and who kept the rest in convulsions of obsequious laughter. Suddenly, in answer to a sort of mock-modest self-disparagement on the part of one of the male listeners, the young lady of robust health said gaily—

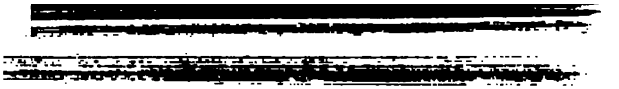
'Come, Captain Mannerly, no one ever accused *you* of being shy!'

'Well, I am now, 'pon word, am. No one believe it, though; but am doosid shy!'

'Particularly with ladies,' said the young lady in robust

Drawn by C. A. Doyle.]

A SHY MAN'S DIFFICULTIES.



health; a sentiment indorsed with a roar of laughter in chorus that was positively unseemly. 'I have a great piece of fun coming,' said the young lady in robust health; 'there is a shy creature to be sent down to see me some time this week, so I am told. A man—only think!—a real shy man! Ha, ha!'

Indecent Chorus. 'Ha, ha, ha!'

'They tell me,' the young lady in robust health went on, 'that he was actually *born* shy, ha, ha!—just as you see infants born with strawberry-marks—and that he blushed in his cradle. Ha, ha!'

Indecent Chorus (as before). 'Ha, ha, ha!'

'I am dying to see the wretch,' she went on. 'We shall have a great day's sport. I shall draw him out, you may be sure.'

'Public admitted,' Captain Mannerly asked, 'aw?'

'Yes—must admit a select circle, you know. I should so like to see you *roast* him!'

'The poor wretch! how we shall tar and feather—but no, I don't think I shall let you in. You will laugh and disgrace me,' said the young lady in robust health.

Here followed chorus, indecent as before—'No, no! 'deed we won't! Come, you must; such fun,' &c.

'And the creature's name?' said another of the young ladies; 'what is it called? where was it found? who found it?'

'I have all particulars,' said the young lady in robust health; 'Blusherly or Blushington or Blushman, or some such title.'

'Haw, haw!' again roared the dragoon. 'Good heavens! Now—now promise me you won't let them send it to you without letting me know. Promise me, now—do!'

'Shall we have a large double magnifying glass, and look at the thing by turns? Ha, ha!' (This came from another of these charitable young persons.)

For myself—all this while I was growing ill. I was becoming sick to death. My forehead had broken out into cold dews. At every fresh coarse insinuation I could feel rushes of blood making straight for my ears. My cheeks were bathed in blood. My forehead was bathed in —no matter, let it pass. But still I read on—read on desperately, and never lifted my eyes for one second. I wonder did the unfeeling crew take note of my flaming ear-tips glowing like hot embers. In the dark they would have looked fiery, like the ends of lighted cigars. These were my sufferings at that terrible moment.

The natural impulse would have been to have, as it were, taken the bull by the horns at the outset, and boldly proclaimed my style and titles, when it was to be seen that the tendency of the conversation was about to be personal and disparaging. But unhappily I was a shy man. Another pardonable impulse would have been, when the conversation had pronounced itself as decidedly personal and disparaging, not to have taken the bull by the horns—which kine was not present—but to have taken the insolent dragoon by the throat, who actually *was* present. But here again I was a shy man. The act of throwing off my disguise, in a Roderick Dhu fashion, before such a company, would have killed me.

Presently, to my unspeakable relief, the young lady in robust health diverted the conversation into another channel, making sport of some other wretched victim, and I began to breathe again. After all, it was a trial, a heavy blow and deep discouragement; but still it might have been worse. I was an unknown quantity, a bird of passage whom they should never see again. As for *her*—no matter; there was a train at one thirty-five, ten minutes after the arrival of our own, and by that should I return. Here was a station now which would possibly relieve me of the whole party. At least, I could change carriages; find a place in a more sanitary neighbourhood; but again,

I was a shy man, and should have to pass between two rows to reach the door.

As the train was stopping, I saw relief at hand in the shape of my friend Whilkers' familiar head gliding by, looking out for some object. I was glad to see Whilkers' familiar head: among these wild social Otaheitans it would be some protection. The familiar face had seen me too, for I saw it moving to keep up with the carriage. Here it was, now looking in at the carriage window, and interchanging hearty salutation with—the young person in robust health! I had not been seen.

'Good gracious me,' said the young person in robust health, 'are you coming in, Mr. Whilkers?—lots of room.'

'Was just going down to pay you a visit,' said Whilkers, entering. 'Hallo!' he added, seeing me then first, 'are you there? How d'ye do, old fellow?'

Though thus publicly addressed, I was not very much thrown out. The shocks of the last few minutes had hardened me to anything. Neither did I see, through some obtuseness (*quem Deus*, &c.), the terrible precipice on which I was standing. So I said to Whilkers that I was quite well, thank him, and fell back into my railway volume. But by and by it came. Whilkers is a man of what are called easy manners. He can talk without any grist, and can bake without flour, and only barm. And so, busy with our mutual friend Billington's coming marriage, he appealed to me for the young lady's name whom Billington was about to wed.

'Who is it, eh, BLUSHERLY? You should know.'

There was much confusion, as may be well imagined. The guilty beings round me were disordered in their turn. I saw them interchange glances of shame, and possibly contrition; all save, indeed, that abandoned young person in robust health, who had got her handkerchief to her mouth, I am afraid, struggling with suppressed laughter. For myself, I was strangely calm, and, for a shy man,

wonderfully self-possessed. But it was the calmness of despair. No doubt my heart, and those significant bursts of blood to the cheeks and extremities of the ears—but I was very calm, on the whole.

My friend Whilkers, on this sudden pause and confusion, looked from one to the other in amazement. He could not comprehend the blank, the consternation that had fallen on the company. He saw them looking at me doubtless with some strange expression, for he said, 'By the way, I had forgot. I thought you knew each other. Let me introduce my friend Blusherly. I believe,' added Whilkers knowingly, 'my friend Blusherly meant to contrive this acquaintance for himself some day this week, and perhaps I have spoiled his pleasure.'

More confusion; the young person of robust health suffocating with laughter—I again crimsoning with shame. As I think of the heartless jests that will follow, at my expense, my heart sinks; I know not where to look; I am ashamed to lift my head; I am hot, from my toes upwards —raging white heat. My friend Whilkers, from sheer puzzle, has become silent. We are all silent.

A station, a lonely station, where no one was to get out or get in—a blessed relief and deliverance. Though a shy man, I got up to descend.

'Why on earth do you get out here?' said Whilkers; 'whom *can* you want to see here?'

With a ghastly smile I murmured something about friends waiting, and tore myself from his clutch, somewhat rudely, I must confess. The next instant I was on the ground—free. I saw them all straining to look after me, in undisguised bursts of vulgar merriment. Low creatures! I was free! But I had to wait until the evening, and saw train after train go by; for this was a lonely unfrequented station, with but small traffic. I shall not soon forget that day of suffering. Why is it that Fate heaps these trials on natures the worst calculated in the world to bear them?

II.

YET another scene from these tribulations of a shy man. One feature in the inevitable destiny of shy men has been already noted—that they are, as it were, specially marked out for suffering and social degradation. The observing student of life and manners cannot fail to have taken notice of this phenomenon: how the ordinary, being distinguished in no respect for brilliancy of parts or intellect—nay, rather positively deficient in these qualities—seem to flounder heavily through life, with perfect satisfaction, and without attracting any painful notoriety; how the brazen and the foolish are happily exempted from all social pitfalls and *cul de sacs*, or who, if they *do* chance to stumble into such, do so without any glaring conspicuousness, and are assisted out humanely. But if the shy man should unhappily trip, the whole world looks round, and shrieks with amusement, relishing it as a trifle. An indifferent little accident, harmless in another, becomes in him food for inextinguishable laughter. We may go further, and say that such casualties do some way perversely fall only on the heads of shy men. A mysterious law seems somehow to nicely direct misfortune in that one direction. This phenomenon, illustrative of a too partial distribution of the casualties of life, as well as of the uncharitableness of our common nature, cannot have escaped the observant mind.

When, too, the shy man, driven to desperation, would make an effort, and cast away this burden which weighs him down, and triumphing over this fatal curse would stand forward on equal terms with his fellow-men, it seems to be another fatal law of his destiny that this praiseworthy effort should only bring him worse confusion. Either his poor pretence is at once seen through, and he is dealt with summarily, as a shy man in a brazen

man's clothing, which may be indeed but a just retribution; or else he plays his part so clumsily that he is detected forthwith. For a shy man, *quâ* shy man, there may be some merciful consideration, considering that he is what he is, and cannot help so being; but for a shy man who is not only a shy man, but impostor also, there can be no extenuation.

A second short apologue, drawn from my own experience, may be of use in illustrating the sorrows to which this unhappy class is subject.

Once we were living at the aquatic suburb of Richmond, and the tone of that neighbourhood being eminently tranquil—tame, slow, stupid, were the phrases that rough spirits of the outer world applied to it—I somehow found myself becoming more reconciled to human nature. It was a sort of pastoral country, and the community in which I moved were more or less leavened with pastoral feelings; and though I believe I was really the only shy —retiring, I should say—man in the place, still no one rudely made sport of my infirmity: nay, I received such soothing treatment, such hopeful encouragement, that really I began to grow bold and assured, and even forward; and at last began to speculate whether it might not have been, after all, a sort of delusion—that I had been standing all this while in my own light, as it were; and to consider whether I was not by nature a rather forward, pushing, impudent person. I found myself, to my perfect amazement, talking loudly in a crowded room, and taking little pardonable liberties, justified by the laws of the drawing-room. It is but fair, at the same time, to add that I was about the only available male person in the district, available, that is, for practicable social uses: and it should be mentioned that the female pastures over which I strayed were of a serious semi-theological tone. This may account for that curious change I found in myself about this time.

All would have gone well but for the advent, early in the summer, of a strange irregular family, with whom we had some London acquaintance, and who had come down for health and the aquatics—a proceeding rational indeed so far, and not to be objected to on serious grounds. It is lawful to seek health in conjunction with the aquatics, without let or impediment, and yet this apparently innocuous movement was fraught with fatal consequences to me. When I heard that the Shakerlys — mother, daughter Julia, and two roaring noisy sons, Horace and John—were coming, I felt a cold presentiment, as of coming misfortune, creep slowly over me. And when people stopped me in the open highways, with the glad tidings that 'the Shakerlys had come' (poor thoughtful souls! why should *they* be glad?), I gave a ghastly smile, and staggered under the blow. Some little time I had hoped for to be ready for the stroke, but I was scarcely prepared for this so soon. No matter: and as I walked up the hill to take one more look at that famous Thames view (I was almost adding for the last time, but I did not meditate suicide), the horrid thought filled me that I was being strangely altered as I walked, and that, by a mysterious change, I was becoming a shy man again!

The mother of the Shakerlys was a London mother—a mother of parties, of routs, the common mother of all young men—like our bounteous mother earth; in short, the traditional fashionable parent. The Shakerly youths, Horace and John, were rude, noisy, blatant, coarse-minded fellows—persons that said what they thought, and did what they pleased; in short (I hope I shall be pardoned the expression), perfect *beasts*. I know this word to be coarse, but it is an exact description. Beasts they were. They had loud laughs, revolting cachinnations that jarred on you and made you start. They said what they called good things, and were always busy with an entertainment they called chaffing. From the moment they came I felt

that in figurative, though scarcely accurate, language the peace of the valley was fled; Richmond not, strictly speaking, lying in a valley.

I never met such coarse minds, such rude unmitigated fashion of calling a spade a spade, such freedom of manners, such daily outraging of the ordinary decencies of society. And yet these men, Horace and John, were popular—absolutely popular. People were glad to have them at their houses, and encouraged them in their odious tricks. At times, indeed, I could envy them—envy them, with all their faults! As it was, they shoved me from my little throne, when the usual portion of fallen royalty, utter neglect, became my portion. But I did not complain; and would have looked on without repining, bearing my disgrace with the dignity which makes adversity respectable, had I not begun to mark with feelings of alarm that these odious men were beginning to turn their looks in my direction. They had exhausted all the facetious matter of the district, and began to cast hungry eyes upon me.

One fatal night the Shakerlys gave a party, and on that fatal night to their party did I repair. All through the day curious forebodings whispered that it would be better to stay away; but some horrid fascination drew me on to the edge of the precipice. Nay, at one time it had actually been arranged that I should go into London for the night, on special business; but towards four o'clock, by some mysterious interposition, it was put off till another day; and there was now no excuse for not going to the Shakerly saturnalia. In this I clearly recognised the hand of destiny, and ceased any longer to struggle with my fate.

It came. I entered the chamber, and as I stepped across the threshold felt a *frisson* of horror. It was one of those licentious scenes of riot and revelry which but too often disgraced this Shakerly mansion, and which, under the thin disguise of 'small plays,' as they are called, gave

occasion for revolting displays of animal spirits. Here cotillions and such 'satyric' dances raged, far prolonged into the night, and I used to blush to see young virgins of known virtue and good reputation bursting with hysterical laughter, and actually romping — plainly unmistakably romping — running round with hands, 'threading the needle,' as it was called, in company with fauns and satyrs. These two youths had literally demoralised the country, once the seat of innocence and virtue.

When I entered the carnival was at its height. Miss Julia Shakerly—a terrible young person, that would take the grand llama by his beard without hesitation—I always stood in especial awe of. I shrank from her. To-night she was the soul of the revel. I heard her voice rise above them all. She was laying out the order of the sports and pastimes of the night, surrounded by a ring of noisy satyrs in tail-coats. I cannot recall having ever seen so unfeminine a spectacle. Ah! woe is me that I ever entered that dreadful place!

I would have no share in their profane rites. They had but asked me with a monstrous mendacity—a cloak for what was to follow—'to take a cup of tea.' Miserable pretence! which I should have seen through. I got no tea. There was not even the poor sham of cups and saucers. I sank into a corner and attached myself to a safe and serious dowager of goodly proportions, and with her bewailed the decay of good manners and morals, which is one of the features of our remarkable age.

I was busy in this pleasing intercourse, when I could not but take notice that many eyes were being bent upon me in a peculiarly significant manner, accompanied with a certain secret tittering. I blushed and grew warm, as I always do at any undue amount of notice; and grew warmer still when I saw that damsel, Miss Julia—whom I never yet saw grow warm or pink—coming towards my retreat, supported by one of her odious relations. What

fell purpose could they have in view? Alas! I should know presently.

Strange, she spoke in very sweet and limpid accents. 'Mr. Blusherly,' she said demurely, 'we are about to play "The Seat of Mahomet," a new game just come out, and very fashionable, and you must join.'

Behind her came a sort of deputation of wild disorderly satyrs, who respected neither age nor sex. What could this betide? and yet she was so soft and gentle!

In faltering accents I murmured that I did not know the principles that regulated the Seat of Mahomet, and that I could never hope to learn them—and that—that—Here, seeing everybody listening and smiling, I felt much agitated and could not finish. It was a horrible state of publicity.

'You *must* play,' she went on; 'I am queen here, and I order you. I shall teach you myself. Come!'

Here two forward satyrs insolently took me by the arms, and led me into the middle to where a chair, known, for the purpose of the game, as the Seat of Mahomet, was placed. I felt horribly during this degradation. I did not know how to behave, but took refuge in what I fear must have been neither more nor less than an inane grin. Unresisting, and utterly enfeebled in mind and body, I was placed in the chair which was known as the Seat of Mahomet, and the conspirators gathered round in a circle. At that moment I saw distinctly, as in a magic mirror, all the horrors that were to come, and yet felt helpless as a child.

The principle of Mahomet's Seat was then briefly explained by one of the young Indians there present. It seems it was actually invented by Miss Julia Shakerly herself as a sort of scientific exercise, and was considered a highly ingenious thing. It was held to be very instructive and improving as a physiognomical training, and was played somewhat in this wise:

I was placed on Mahomet's chair, as just mentioned (why the prophet was selected was not made plain). Miss Julia stood beside me, and, I was told, bore the temporary designation of the Priestess. For this arbitrary appellation no reason was given either. All the populace were then gathered into a crowd at one end of the room (and a very disorderly crowd they were), all giggling, laughing, and obstreperously noisy. A horrid feeling began to take possession of me that the whole was a deep-laid scheme, against me especially. But I sat on, smiling spasmodically.

It began. The rite was something in this wise: One by one the company were led up, under the guidance of the Priestess, and placed before me: beginning with the youth Horace. Insolently he pryed and peered into my face—even taking hold of the more prominent features; and when I faintly deprecated this familiarity, and made as though I would rise, I was pushed back with indignity into my seat, and told 'it was the game.' Having surveyed me thus attentively, he whispered something in the Priestess's ear, which was received with an explosion of merriment and forthwith written down on a piece of paper. I could well imagine it was some disparaging criticism. Then came another, then another—all apparently, from the gradually intensifying merriment, growing more and more personal. And so the horrid torture went on until all had finished. Then Miss Julia proceeded to read out what she called my 'phrenological development,' collected from the various opinions. What I went through during this portion of the ceremony will never be effaced from my mind. I wonder my hair did not turn white that night: as it was, beads of dew stood upon my forehead.

Priestess reads:

'Phrenological development of C. Blusherly, Esq.

1. 'An out-and-out muff.'

2. 'A very mild youth.'

3. 'No brains.'
4. 'Reared on asses' milk.'
5. 'Would not harm a fly.'

6. 'Tame as a cat.'
7. 'Very soft indeed.'
8. 'Not to be trusted without a keeper.'
9 'Fond of nurse.'

During the recital of these personalities, each of which was received with a scream of delight, I thought I should have died. I still continued to grin a ghastly smile, and when she had done rose with the secret purpose of rushing wildly at the door. But rude hands caught me by the shoulders and forced me back again, assuring me that 'the game was not half over yet.'

'Dear me, no, Mr. Blusherly,' the Priestess said, suffocating with laughter (six months in an asylum or house of correction would have done her a world of good); 'the fun is all to come as yet.'

This was the fun that came:

'Now,' said she, 'I am to ask you some questions, and you are to answer. That is the rule of the game. You are on your trial. I am the judge, and here is the jury.'

I to answer questions! more tribulation heaped on this wretched head!

'Now,' she went on, reading out, 'I find that some wicked person has said that you are "an out-and-out muff." Do you admit or deny the charge?'

With a feeble smile I murmured something mechanically to the effect of 'Of course not.'

A voice from the crowd called out rudely, 'Speak up!'

'Of course not,' she said; 'we all know that; ha, ha! Well, as you say Not Guilty, you must prove your case. How do you show you are not an "out-and-out muff?"'

This was the fun alluded to. I was badgered, cross-examined, insulted, trod upon, bruised (morally, of course), until in about three-quarters of an hour's time I was all but ripe for an asylum. I was made to show that I had not 'been reared on asses' milk,' in the 'words of my plea,' as a young barrister of the company put it. My head was felt over, to see if it was a conformation indicative of brains. And finally the case was sent to the jury, and a verdict taken—which was to the effect that I had not 'made out my plea.' I was too agitated at the time to

notice that ingenious perversion of legal practice which threw the burden of proof on me. But let that pass. I proved nothing—attempted nothing—did nothing. Several times I was on the verge of fainting. Finally, when they had exhausted all the arts that their malice could suggest, I was set free—more from weariness in their game than from any feeling of compassion for their victim. I fled from the house, and arrived at the paternal mansion quite wild and dazed, and slightly bordering on the verge of idiotcy. They told me I spoke incoherently on questions being put to me. From that hour I remained a hopeless, incurable shy man.

III.

I HAVE yet a third experience. An interval of years is supposed to have elapsed between this act and the last. Some years had passed over my head, and brought with them, possibly, wisdom and additional shyness. I was a wiser and a better—and a shyer—man. The scene, too, is changed to a retired watering-place, slightly decadent, and growing unfashionable, and not likely to be visited by the rude blasts of raillery and what is vulgarly called 'chaff'—a sequestered vale, as it were, tinged with tea and seriousness. I was comparatively happy there. I was treated gently and considerately; and the shrinking and retiring nature with which I had been endowed was not likely to be exposed to those cruel tests which had really shattered the whole system, and made me subject to fits of timidity like fits of epilepsy. It was stupid, yet healthful; it was dull, yet decent and sober.

So it continued until that fate or destiny, which is peculiarly hostile to shy men, brought into the neighbourhood a wandering showman, who took the Rooms, and placarded the dead walls copiously with his announcements. When I say a showman, I mean he was an electro-

biologist—a gentleman who lectured on that science, and 'illustrated it with living examples.' It was proposed that the aristocracy of the place should patronise the show; but with a strange instinct in these matters, which never deceives me, I hung back. I was suspicious of those words 'living examples,' which in themselves contained a warning. But I was seduced into going. There was a charming girl mixed up in the business (a charming girl whom I fancied was about eventually to become Mrs. Blusherly; but that is a separate history, and neither here nor there—*there*, if either of the two); and the charming girl was anxious I should attend on her (of course in the society of her parent) to the scene of entertainment. I begin to suspect now that the charming girl had no other escort; but that, too, is neither here nor there.

In the evening we repaired to the entertainment—the charming girl, her mamma, and I. The Rooms were full, and on going in the gentleman who gave the tickets gave us also vouchers and numbers, bidding us take great care of the same. The object of this arrangement was, handsomely to give us all a chance of some 'valuable prizes,' which, as the bills informed us, were to be given away that night. We accordingly took care of our numbers and vouchers, and those of the charming girl and her mamma were given to me to keep.

The operator made his appearance, gave the usual prefatory remarks, and finally begged that a number of gentlemen would 'favour him' by stepping up on the platform. Some half a dozen were with difficulty wheedled up from their places and arranged in constrained attitudes on chairs. Still there were scarcely sufficient, and the operator looked wistfully round for more. I saw his eye settle with a longing expression on me. I could imagine that he thought my peculiar organisation admirably adapted for his nefarious ends; and at the bare notion I felt my face glowing and flushing in a raging spasmodic

fashion. Gracious! he was speaking—actually addressing me—pointedly, individually, before the whole company!

'Will *you*, sir? *Would* you favour me, sir—oblige the audience? Would you step up?'

In a drawing-room—in the open air—it is well enough, or rather ill enough; I can endure it. But being thus interpellated before the public! My tongue clove to my mouth. I *could* not answer, and took refuge in a dogged silence. The charming girl looked at me wondering. *Now*, I believe she was anxious I should exhibit myself in this ridiculous light. It seems to me that every one wishes *me* to furnish him with food for laughter. But let *that* pass.

I remained stolidly immovable, insensible. Possibly the operator thought me deaf. I never answered him or appeared to hear him. There was wisdom after all in this foolishness. He desisted at last, and I was left in peace.

He began his tricks—his incantations, I mean. The half a dozen men were set to work to stare at small zinc discs, and at the end of a suitable time five were discovered to be in exactly the same condition as at starting, and were 'cast' as unfit for the service. Remained only one who showed symptoms of somnolency, admirably pronounced. Him I suspect to have been a salaried 'living example;' but let that pass too. He did the usual surprising feats—danced, sang, played, made speeches, got drunk, got angry, squared at his employer—I mean the operator—and exhibited the regulation surprise when brought back to the ordinary world, on his emp—the operator saying it was 'all right.' Then came the 'giving away' of the 'prizes.'

There were clocks, jars, a stray silver watch or two, and a profusion of doubtful guard-chains. The numbers were drawn in a sort of lottery; and I felt a little excited as I thought of the possibility of a winning number being mine, when suddenly, on a successful one being pro-

claimed, I saw the holder rise from his seat, and amid applause walk up a long lane to receive his prize, with every eye turned on him in envy or admiration. This frightful ordeal *I* never could endure—never, never; and I actually trembled in my seat as I thought of the bare possibility—the horrible piece of luck—of a prize falling to me.

Happily all passed by; all were nearly drawn, save a really pretty French pendule, purposely kept for the last, as the most valuable. He drew out the number. I scarcely breathed.

'Five hundred and sixty.'

Not mine, thank Heaven! I was safe. But there was a little scream of delight beside me.

'*My* number!' said the charming girl. 'My number; do you hear? How delightful! how nice! Where is it? quick! Go up and get it.'

'Any claimant for number five hundred and sixty?' said the operator, looking round.

'Quick!' said the charming girl; 'go up for it; he is waiting.'

Go up for it, with all those eyes bent on me? Not for millions! It was not a question of mere will; the power was wanting. I *could* not have stirred. I smiled, I am afraid feebly.

'When did you hear from your sister?' I said, attempting to give a turn to the conversation.

'If no one claims this beautiful article,' said the operator, 'we must pass it, and keep it for another night.'

'Do you hear?' said the charming girl, very impatiently; 'go up, *do*. I shall lose my clock. Where is the number?'

'Where?' I said wildly. Ah, blessed thought! 'I am afraid,' I continued, feeling my pockets, 'that I have—really—I am afraid it is lost. Are you sure you gave it to me?'

The charming girl *looked* at me—I think she could not trust herself to speak; and the parent of the charming girl murmured something that in the distance had a sound akin to 'stupid.'

'Then,' said the operator, 'there being no claimant for this beautiful and truly chaste article, it shall be reserved for the next evening, when we hope, ladies and gentlemen, to have the pleasure,' &c.

'Yes,' said I, still feeling my pockets, 'I am really afraid I have lost it.'

The charming girl said not a word. Whether I had or had not lost the number matters not now; but at that time something else was lost too—the charming girl herself, who ever after could scarcely speak to me with civility.

And so to this day I remain a shy man—indeed, I may say, the shyest of shy men.

TIME WORKS WONDERS.

BY F. C. BURNAND.

CHAPTER I.

HOW THE WEDDING WAS SETTLED.

ONCE upon a time the Princess Daisetta, who had been found at a very early age all alone in a wood by the Fairy Fiery, and rescued by her from the fangs of a wolf—the Princess Daisetta was about to be married; an important epoch in any young lady's life, but specially in the history of the Princess Daisetta, *protégée* of the Fairy Fiery.

It is very difficult to find the motives for a good action in a person generally bad, wicked past all hope. The Fairy Fiery was an uncommonly vicious spirit. The Fairy Fiery's lease would expire at a given date, if she had not a successor. This heiress she saw in the little child she had saved from a cruel death. The motive was bad, the action was good. Un-

fortunately for the fairy, and fortunately for the young lady, the Princess Daisetta refused, positively, to yield to the fairy's wishes.

'If I become a wicked fairy,' exclaimed the charming girl, 'I'll be—'

What she was going to say can only faintly be conjectured, for Fairy Fiery gave such a shriek that all the wild animals, for miles round, were suddenly taken ill, and

the roofs of several castles in the neighbourhood were split up, as if by an earthquake.

But it did not prevent the messenger of Karrabosso, the Enchanter, from knocking loudly at the door.

Old Karrabosso had been a wicked old dog in his time; and, being immortal, he had still a good spell of life before him.

Karrabosso was hard up. He had been a spendthrift, a prodigal Enchanter; and his son too, Karrabosso junior,

had managed to spend a heap of the treasures which his father had acquired in the exercise of his profession; and *now* the old Enchanter could not spare his son any more money.

Karrabosso senior was tired of attending evening parties, as he had done for ages of ages, with his bags of tricks, omelettes in hats, and eggs in handkerchiefs; and his son was too much the gentleman to take to his father's work, though he had no objection to spend his father's money. Karrabosso's immortality was becoming a dreary prospect.

An immortal bankrupt is an existence dreadful to contemplate! Karrabosso's ingenuity was not equal to the occasion. He could obtain, but could not create, money. And as the superior power, which had endowed him with immortality, had omitted to add brains, Karrabosso, when the ordinary magic failed to produce a livelihood, came to a standstill. So Karrabosso junior suggested that his godmother, the Fairy Fiery, should be consulted.

As a godmother, she had made Karrabosso junior a present. She had given him a watch fashioned by the Hours themselves, to whom she had intrusted the guardianship of her godson. This watch was a talisman, and its possessor had only to wish, and the wish would be immediately gratified.

Now, this talisman would have saved old Karrabosso from many an hour's anguish, and from the impudence of tradesmen, if his son had only consented to wish in accordance with his parent's desires. But, as the Hours were his guardians, the boy's nature was as changeable as the hours themselves. For example, in what disposition you might find him at nine, in half an hour's time he had altered for better or worse, and in another hour he would be, so to speak, a totally different person.

He became thoroughly selfish, and refused to use the talisman for anybody's good except his own. So, while

Karrabosso junior enjoyed himself, Karrabosso senior was nigh starving.

The poor old man visited country villages and large towns; but the world had gone ahead since his tricks were new, and though his legerdemain was perfect, yet every one, unable to do the tricks, knew *how* they were done, and laughed in his face.

Then old Karrabosso took to his bed, but this was of no sort of use. He was immortal. And to stay eternally in bed is monotonous. Besides, he could suffer hunger, and could be thirsty. Altogether his prospects were unpleasant. So, on the advice of his son, he sent to Fairy Fiery, and asked her 'what the something he should do?'

The fairy considered for one moment. She was a handsome woman, very wickedly handsome. Then this virtuous couple arranged between them that Karrabosso junior should marry Daisetta, who, during the honeymoon, should steal the watch and give it to Karrabosso and the Fairy Fiery, who agreed to become Madame Karrabosso, with a share in her husband's immortality. The day for Daisetta's wedding was straightway fixed.

CHAPTER II.

HOW THE BRIDEGROOM DIDN'T COME UP TO TIME.

EVERYBODY of any note or celebrity had been invited; but as I shall have occasion to give the list of guests later on in my story, I will not stop to do so now.

As nobody was omitted, everybody was there. Daisetta was in her room being dressed. Her maids were working at her with a will.

'Blanche,' she said to her confidante, 'I don't know young Signor Karrabosso.'

'But you will, Princess,' replied the maiden, 'and it is a pleasure to come.'

'A pleasure!' sighed Daisetta.

'Why, you don't mean—' exclaimed Miss Blanche, raising her hands in astonishment, and quite unable to finish her sentence.

'I do,' said Daisetta.

'You love . . .' murmured Blanche sympathetically in her ear, and then added suggestively—'another?'

'I do.'

'Who?'

'I don't know.'

'You mean you don't know his name, dear?'

'Neither his name, nor his country, nor . . . nor . . . in fact, anything about him. Except . . . that I have met him in the land of Pleasant Dreams.'

'The land of dreams!' asked Blanche; 'where is that?'

'In the East,' answered the Princess; 'it is called the land of Nod, I believe. The reigning sovereign is Queen Mab, who lives in the palace of Good Repose.'

'He loves you?'

'Adores me.'

'He has told you so?' inquired Blanche, who knew that Daisetta had never once been out of her sight.

'Yes.'

'When?'

'Every time I've seen him,' murmured the Princess, 'in the land of dreams.'

'He is a reality?' asked Blanche, who began to feel a little uncomfortable as to the state of her friend's sanity.

'Yes,' answered Daisetta, 'he is a happy peasant. I had intended to tell young Signor Karrabosso everything, throw myself on his generosity, implore his pardon, and ask him to take me away.'

'Take you away!' exclaimed Blanche.

'Yes; don't you see, it's my only chance of getting out of Fiery's clutches.'

'Ah!'

'Then when he's taken me away, we should go—you and I, dear Blanche' (the Princess interpolated this craftily, so as to prevent treachery)—'together, to Queen Mab, who would introduce us to the happy peasant Beaulèvre—that's his name—and I am sure that you, too, would soon find room in your heart for one of the inhabitants of the happy land.'

Blanche blushed. Then she was silent. So they both sat, without speaking, and, in one second, they were in Queen Mab's domain, wandering in fancy through shady groves, by brooks babbling, in musical language, tales of passionate love, and finding kindred souls whose pulses beat in unison with theirs.

The bell of the castle roused them from their reverie.

'Everybody's come!' exclaimed a domesticated dragon-

headed servant, rushing into the room in a state of tremendous excitement, 'and the Enchanter Karrabosso has been sighted through my lady's magic telescope. He is only two thousand leagues off.'

The maidens exchanged glances, and clasped each other's hands.

'Let us descend to the saloon,' said Daisetta. Blanche acquiesced, and they soon presented themselves before the Fairy Fiery. She was magnificent on this day. Most magnificent. Her chignon of glittering serpents, every

one of whose scales gleamed with flames of ever-varying tint, was a thing to be seen and be wondered at.

She was simply brilliant.

Her eyes—well, they possessed the *beauté du diable* in its very essence. Hot coals would have been merely dull lead by the side of her eyes. Such Eyes! they'd warm you gratefully, stir you up to diabolical enthusiasm for love, scorch you in anger, reduce you to ashes in vengeance, and, generally speaking, make havoc everywhere.

Two thousand leagues off did old Karrabosso see those

eyes, and stop his aërial carriage, under the impression that the end of the world had come, and that it might be dangerous to go too near.

'I'm immortal,' he said to himself, 'it's true; but my balloon isn't, and might be blown up any minute. Precious awkward,' he thought, 'to be pitched out into space, and spend my eternity in perpetually falling. I wonder where I should stop? Somewhere, I suppose, for one must draw the line somewhere. But'—here he directed his glass in the direction of the flames—'bless me!'—not that he said anything so pious as this, the wicked old sinner, but the expression is *near enough*—'they're *her* eyes!—Madame Karrabosso's eyes!—for it's certain now that she will be my wife. Ahem! Well, it's all for the best. My son's talisman once in my pocket, I shall wish every one at Jericho, except those who are useful to me, and then shall I go in for unexampled happiness, in doing precisely what I please!' The wicked old man was getting quite excited at the notion of an eternity of selfishness, and foresaw the arrival of the supreme moment when he would pay out his amiable son for his unfilial conduct.

'Drive on!' he shouted. And away went the stupendous balloon, drawn by eight cream-coloured monsters, and guided by an accomplished creature, something between an eagle and a dolphin, who handled the ribbons, and tooled the team along, as if it had been a Bath coach in the old days, before steam was much thought of out of a tea-kettle.

Trumpets, drums, cymbals, banjoes, sackbuts, harps, and every sort of musical instrument announced the Enchanter's arrival.

He entered the courtyard.

'Madame, I am delighted,' he said, addressing Fiery, with the air of an old beau, and the *politesse* of Louis Quinze.

Then the fairy led him to the saloon of reception.

Here Daisetta was introduced to him, and the old fellow ogled her through his binocle. But Fairy Fiery would not permit any semblance of flirtation to pass unnoticed. She gave him *a* look, and the elderly Enchanter felt as if he was being calcined on the spot.

'She is,' he thought to himself, 'evidently a person not to be trifled with. But when she becomes Madame Karrabosso, and when I've got the talisman—'

'We are waiting for the bridegroom,' said Fairy Fiery.

Daisetta sighed.

'And for the breakfast,' said Karrabosso senior, who had come fifty million billion and quadrillion miles that morning, and upon whom the fresh air had taken considerable effect; 'I'm as hungry as an ogre.'

'Hush!' whispered Fiery to him. 'Not so loud.' The old beau turned, and then saw that there were several Ogres in the room. They had been invited among the other wedding guests, and every one of them had turned himself out a thorough buck, with a blue dress-coat, white waistcoat, and such a wedding favour, white tie, and rhododendron in his buttonhole, as had never been seen, dreamt of, or thought of, since Ogres employed tailors.

The Ogres were yawning. This was a bad sign. It meant hunger, and hunger means ill temper.

'Where's Karrabosso junior?' became then the question.

Then the fairy requested his father to ascend to the highest tower, and look through the magic telescope.

This telescope was a sort of gigantic deception, for it 'took in' the whole world, inside and out—cities, plains, houses, no matter where. It had belonged to Le Diable Boiteux, and had been given by him, as a birthday present, years since, to the Fairy Fiery.

So Karrabosso ascended, and wiping the glass, peered forth into space.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT KARRABOSSO SAW.

To tell you *all* that Karrabosso saw through the wonderful glass would take me from now till the end of several generations, and even then it couldn't be more than sketched.

Words could not be heard, motives could not be arrived at, through the glass. But deeds spoke for themselves, and Karrabosso observed—

'It's not such a bad place, after all!' He alluded to the world.

For one second, perhaps, he began to wish that Mortality had been his lot.

He began to have, for the first time in his long life, good thoughts. But they were so novel and startling, that he put his hand to his head, and was frightened lest he should be going out of his mind. To be an Immortal Maniac! It was a fearful idea, and would not bear a second thought.

'No,' he said, after some consideration, 'it's not that. I've had nothing to eat since breakfast, and it's beginning to tell upon me. Hang Count Karrabosso junior! where is he? What is he doing? He is the most inconsiderate, unfeeling, selfish, unfilial—in fact—Hallo!' Here (for he had been growling away with his eye to the glass) he suddenly started, for he had caught a glimpse of his young Hopeful in Arabia, and the jolt that sight had made him give the instrument had disarranged the focus. This caused him to lose time, and more temper.

'See anything?' inquired Fairy Fiery from below (like another Fatima to an elderly *Brother* Anne on the roof).

'Yes,' exclaimed Karrabosso. 'you may expect intelligence from me in one minute.'

The dwarfs, listening, chuckled at this idea. 'Expect *intelligence* from old Karrabosso!' they said. 'My! we shall have to wait a long time for that.' Sharp chaps, dwarfs, specially hungry dwarfs. It took some time to explain their witticism to the Ogres. Stupid idiots, Ogres, and crusty, when kept waiting for dinner.

However, all this filled up time, while old Karrabosso focussed again, and looked out.

Count Karrabosso junior was fighting with Algerine pirates, and, of course, killing them. From them he rescued a damsel, lovely.

'Odd, this!' grunted old Karrabosso.

To her the young Count knelt imploringly. Then he pressed her hand, which she did not withdraw. Then he arose from his knees and put his arm round her waist.

'Bravo!' exclaimed old Karrabosso, and muttered, 'I've been a boy myself.' Then the maiden looked up in the young Count's eyes, and said—*what* the looker-on could not hear—(could he have heard all that was being said wherever he looked and listened, the proverb about listeners would have been verified and illustrated a million times a minute, for no one who knew old Karrabosso had a good word for the ancient reprobate)—but there could be no sort of doubt that she asked the Count 'if he really meant all he was saying?' and equally, no doubt, that he replied, 'Mean it!—every word. I swear I'm not deceiving you.'

'It's one of his bad hours, aha!' exclaimed his fond parent. 'Bother him, he'll sacrifice me, and everything, for this fair-haired chit, whom he rescued in his good hours from the pirates. Cuss it!' The old boy was getting very irritable.

Whatever design the Count might have had, he suddenly abandoned it, and, overcome by an emotion totally unintelligible to the venerable Enchanter, he bent respect-

'Hooray!' shouted everybody. All were happy, and eager to get it over.

It was certainly a trying situation. Even the Count hadn't made up his mind. That was the worst of it. He could not find it in his heart to say, 'Miss Daisetta, I love another, and *you* are not that other.' To which Daisetta could only have replied, 'Count, 'tis the very thing that I was going to say to you.'

'Punctuality,' exclaimed the senior Ogre, Baron Garrogoswig, 'is the soul of business and pleasure.'

'The ceremony is fixed for eleven,' said Fiery. 'It wants five minutes.'

'Beg pardon, my lady,' Karrabosso put in, for he, too, was in a hurry, so much depended on the event—'beg pardon, Fairy, it's past eleven.'

'There's one person who can't be mistaken as to time,' quoth her fairyship; 'that's the Count. Count,' she cried, 'what's the time by your magic watch?'

Count Karrabosso put his hand languidly in his fob. He paused, and did not draw it out again. He became suddenly pale.

'He wants his breakfast, poor fellow!' said Daisetta. Pity is akin to love.

No: it was not that.

Again he fumbled in his pocket. On his right side—on his left side. No—no. Where could it be?

'Be!' exclaimed the Fairy Fiery; 'where can *what* be?' and the rage in her eyes was something too terrible to witness.

'What! why . . . . I've . . . . I've . . . .'

'Speak out!' roared old Karrabosso.

'*I've lost the magic watch!*'

* * * * *

No marriage on that day.

No wedding. No arrangements for the old sorcerer's future happiness. No bright prospect for Fairy Fiery.

Everything wrong.

Daisetta in tears, vaguely.

'You're a fool,' cried the enraged sire, who could now speak to his son as the merest idiotic mortal. 'You've been robbed.'

'By whom?'

'You did a good action,' said the wicked old man sarcastically, 'in rescuing a girl from pirates.'

'Ha! the pirates robbed me.'

'The pirates!' sneered the old man—'bah! it was the girl.'

'No! she is all that is good, all that is—'

'Go back, then, and find your watch.'

Once more he mounted his car. This time to retrace his steps.

Then the Ogres and the guests wanted to breakfast, but the Fairy Fiery's passion had become uncontrollable.

She literally blazed away all over the place. The Ogres, Giants, Dwarfs, Fairies, Sprites, all fled right and left, and, in another instant, a spark flew from her eyes and set the castle in flames. Then Daisetta and Blanche crept away and hid themselves in a wood. Here they were found by a Waking Dream, who put them upon a wild steed, the night mare, and away they went, far, far, out of the reach, for the present, of the Fairy Fiery; and when they stopped it was at the sign of The Golden Sleep, in the outskirts of Queen Mab's kingdom.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT HAPPENED THEN.

COUNT KARRABOSSO junior returned to the Watteauesque village. He alighted at the door of Nina's cottage.

Nina was the exquisite beauty whom he had rescued from Algerine pirates.

She was thinking of him when he stood before her.

'Nina,' he exclaimed, 'I love you. You know I do!'

'Have you come back to tell me that?' asked the maiden coquettishly.

'No,' he replied; 'I have returned to ask you if you've seen my watch?'

'Your watch?' She didn't understand him.

'Yes,' he continued, 'my magic watch! Where is it?'

'Not here, certainly!' was her answer.

Count Karrabosso paused. Was it possible that one so young, so fair, could deceive him? For the matter of that it was, it struck him unpleasantly, quite possible. But was it probable? Unhappily, yes. The watch was valuable, and Nina was poor.

'You are *sure* you've not seen it?' he asked searchingly.

'Would you like to empty my pockets? Will you take up the floor?—there is no carpet! Will you—will you—Oh! oh!' Here, unable to restrain herself longer, she burst into tears.

The Count was touched. He had wronged her. On his knees he begged, he implored her pardon. More—on his knees he swore by all that was oathable, by all that Nina held sacred, that if he could only find his watch, he would make her his wife.

After this she explained, as well as she was able, that the only person likely to have intruded into her cottage was one Master Beaulèvre. 'A sleepy, idle, good, kind creature,' she said, 'who spends his life in dreaming. Our parents betrothed us to one another when we were babies, and it's simply become a matter of course.'

'I'll find him!' cried the Count. 'But if he winds up the watch every hour regularly, for the remainder of this day—and it is now six P.M.—no power on earth, or in air, can restore my talisman to me. Oh, if I could only see my godmothers now!'

'Who are they?'

'The Hours.'

She asked him why he didn't consult them at once. He didn't know their address. He had lost his Time. He went out and looked up at the church tower.

Six o'clock was fast approaching.

If he could only catch that Hour to the minute as she settled upon the old cathedral tower, she, in such a place, and on such an occasion, would, he was sure, assist him.

Only five minutes more! The seconds came hopping on nimbly, as if they were the little pages in advance of Queen Six o'clock, and the minutes marched behind each band of sixty, marshalling them along in order.

The last regiment of seconds, the last Chief Marshal Minute, and then the rustle of the mechanism announcing the arrival of the Regal Hour.

Then a tune, merry, blithe, and joyous. A carillon sparkling and cheery.

Then the Hammer on the bell. *Bing! Bing!* six times, and the Hour perched lightly on the summit of the old Gothic bell-tower, waving her wand over the town.

Karrabosso stretched his hands towards her.

She saw, knew, and pitied.

Then she answered for herself and sisters.

'My sister Four o'clock,' she said, 'saw Beaulèvre take the watch. He didn't know its value. But its presence in Nina's house made him suspect that—that—she had been faithless to him. The Night and Early Morning Hours could tell you more about Beaulèvre than I. And my twin-sister Six A.M. met him before sunrise in the land of dreams. We will prevent him from winding up the talisman if we possibly can. We have no power to see into the future, nor can I tell you what my next sister Seven o'clock will do. But this I will undertake for all—that we will do our best. In the mean time be close by him, and when midnight strikes, and he forgets for the last time to wind up the talisman, you may then repossess yourself of it without fear. But, beware! for I have been present when your father has determined to obtain it himself; and the Fairy Fiery is also in search of it. You have powerful rivals. Farewell! I can stay here no longer, and have only been able to remain with you these few minutes on account of the difference of clocks. There's a laggard timepiece in this city that I always visit last, then I am on duty for an hour. After that I shall see you!'

So the Hours, his godmothers, were to help him, and this was the trump-card in Karrabosso junior's hand.

His next move was to find Beaulèvre.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW MIDNIGHT ENDED THE DAY.

HER MAJESTY QUEEN MAB received Daisetta and Blanche. She knew them well. Then she requested to know, point blank, if they were not in search of a happy peasant, one Beaulèvre.

Daisetta hesitated, but Blanche answered for her friend, in the affirmative; that is, supposing that the young gentleman's name was Beaulèvre.

'You shall see him,' said the good-natured queen; 'and if you recognise him, that's enough.'

Recognise him! Daisetta knew him in less than two twos, whatever space of time that may represent.

But Beaulèvre was in his own native village, sitting thoughtfully on a bench.

'What's he saying?' asked Daisetta.

They listened.

'Is she false?' murmured the unhappy swain. 'And if she is, what do I care?'

'Does he mean me?' asked Daisetta.

Queen Mab didn't know. He was talking out of her domain.

'No,' continued the peasant, looking at a handsome gold watch which he held in his hand; 'this is proof positive. How could she have come by *this*?' Then he heaved a deep sigh.

* * * * *

Beaulèvre couldn't make out what was the matter with himself.

When he thought of Nina he was angry, so he dismissed her from his mind.

Then he recalled the vision of the lovely princess.

'Ah!' he said to himself, 'I wish I had fifty millions of money; I'd marry her.'

What was this? What did it mean? Men running towards him, crying, 'Beaulèvre! Beaulèvre! Luckiest of men! Fifty millions of money have just been paid into the town bank in your name!'

He thought them mad or drunk.

Then he went to the bank himself. True,—every word true as the bank books themselves: and truer, perhaps.

Every one on his knees to him, crouching, bending, bowing, supplicating, praising. Exciting enough to turn a more powerful brain than Beaulèvre's.

'Why!' he exclaimed, 'I don't know what to do with it.'

Hundreds of people made hundreds of suggestions, by which hundreds of people would have seen themselves enriched.

'You might rebuild part of our town,' said the lord mayor.

'I wish it could be *all* rebuilt,' said Beaulèvre.

No sooner said than done.

Everybody nigh insane all over the place, so beautiful were the houses, so magnificent was the tumble-down old town.

'We only want,' said the celebrated landscape gardener of those parts, 'we only want a river and flower-gardens picturesquely laid out to make it perfect.'

'I wish,' said Beaulèvre, 'that I could give 'em you; but, alas—'

Before the words were out of his mouth there were the gardens, the river, and everything so lovely that description is simply beggared, and dictionaries of laudation are bankrupt.

Beaulèvre was utterly puzzled. Was he in Queen Mab's kingdom, and yet awake?

Every wish was granted as soon as wished.

He wished to be warm without walking: he was warm immediately.

He wished to be cool without getting up to open door or window: in a flash of the sixtieth part of a second he was cool.

He wished that his dinner was ready: it was ready; and every dish he wanted to hand—and to mouth.

At last he hit upon it.

'It must be the watch!' he exclaimed.

'It is!' said a stern voice near him. It was old Karrabosso.

'Give it to me!'

'How do I know it's yours?' asked Beaulèvre.

This made Karrabosso very angry.

Beaulèvre was at dinner, and didn't want to be annoyed.

'I wish this old fellow could be taken away and—and iced;' he uttered the last part of this wish at haphazard.

Karrabosso vanished. Taken away by some mysterious power to be kept in a refrigerator.

An immortal being in a refrigerator for an eternity! For if Beaulèvre should forget his existence, that was the prospect.

Then Beaulèvre went on with his pudding.

'The watch does not belong to Nina,' he said aloud.

'No,' answered a screaming tearing voice, 'it is mine! Give it to me! I am the Fairy Fiery!'

'I should like to know if that's truth,' said Beaulèvre calmly. He was becoming so accustomed to wonders that nothing could upset his equanimity now.

'No, it is false! I have deceived you!' cried the unhappy Fairy, compelled by a power stronger than her own to accuse herself.

'Then,' said Beaulèvre, 'you'd better join that old gentleman who was here just now. I think icing would do you good.'

He wished her to be frozen, and so she was.

Four hours had passed, and no one had ever told him the secret of his tenure.

If he didn't wind it up before twelve, there'd be an end of his holding.

Karrabosso had come to tell him; but he had played his cards badly. So had Fiery.

Then came Nina.

She asked him about the watch, and told him what he at once ascertained was the truth.

Then he wished that the rightful owner would present himself.

Instantly Count Karrabosso junior appeared.

'Count,' said Beaulèvre, 'I shall just keep this watch until I have wished myself all I'm likely to want to make me and my wife comfortable.'

'Wife!' exclaimed Nina.

'Ah! I forgot,' said Beaulèvre; 'we must have her here now.'

A brilliant light; and then they were aware of a Fairy presence in the room:

Queen Mab, with Daisetta, Blanche, and a charming young prince whom Blanche had fallen in love with in Dreamland.

The explanation was at hand.

Beaulèvre wished for millions and millions of money, and for perfect happiness, with Daisetta for his bride. Then he handed back the talisman to Karrabosso junior.

Karrabosso wished much the same as had Beaulèvre, and gave his hand to Nina.

Then he released old Karrabosso from his refrigerator prison, and the Fairy Fiery too. They were furious; but Count Karrabosso merely expressed a wish for their thorough reformation. And old Karrabosso suddenly became the most pious old man ever met with out of a painted window; while the Fairy, who had still many years to live, immediately entered a convent, and spent the remainder of her days in religious exercises.

Then the Count, in the presence of Daisetta and her

new friends, abjured magic, once and—'for all time,' he was going to say, but Daisetta stopped him.

'No!' she cried; 'let all those ogres, dwarfs, giants, fairies, and others who were at our wedding (when it ought to have been, but wasn't) be asked to our three pair of nuptials now.'

Carried *nem. con.* No cards; for a wish brought everybody from Fairy Land, and every other land, to celebrate the weddings of the Prince of Happy Dreams with Mlle. Blanche (the happy pair being munificently provided for by the talisman), Daisetta with Beaulèvre, and Count Karrabosso with Nina.

Then they came. All of 'em. Such a Christmassy sort of wedding party as never had been since the first nursery tale was told in the first nursery.

There were Puss in Boots and the Marquis of Carabas; there were the White Cat, Beauty and the Beast, Valentine and Orson, Jack the Giant-Killer, Jack and the Beanstalk, Hop-o'-my-Thumb, Cinderella, Cinderella's sisters—with the glass slippers to dance in, and the pumpkin carriage. Then there was—but as I see the brilliant crowd before me in those fairy halls, Queen Mab approaches with her elfin train. . . . The guests are all dancing. . . . I see them. . . . And . . . and . . . my hand relaxes its hold of the pen. . . . Queen Mab waves her wand o'er me. . . . I recognise her power. . . . I bow my head before her . . . once . . . twice . . . then . . .

I am in her land of dreams.

THE END.

LONDON: ROBSON AND SONS, PRINTERS, PANCRAS ROAD, N.W

STANDARD SIX-SHILLING NOVELS.

MR. WILLIAM BLACK'S NOVELS.

THREE FEATHERS. By WILLIAM BLACK, Author of "A Daughter of Heth," "A Princess of Thule," &c. Small post 8vo, 6*s*.

A DAUGHTER of HETH. By WILLIAM BLACK. Small post 8vo, 6*s*., with Frontispiece.

IN SILK ATTIRE. By WILLIAM BLACK. Small post 8vo, 6*s*.

"Exhibits the best characteristics of the writer."—*Graphic*.

"A novel worth reading more than once."—*Scotsman*.

LADY SILVERDALE'S SWEETHEART, and other Stories. By WILLIAM BLACK. Small post 8vo, 6*s*.

MR. R. D. BLACKMORE'S NOVELS.

ALICE LORRAINE. A Tale of the South Downs. By R. D. BLACKMORE. Small post 8vo, 6*s*.

LORNA DOONE. A Romance of Exmoor. By R. D. BLACKMORE. Small post 8vo, 6*s*. New Edition (the Tenth).

CRADOCK NOWELL. By R. D. BLACKMORE. Small post 8vo, 6*s*.

CLARA VAUGHAN. By R. D. BLACKMORE. Small post 8vo, 6*s*.

CRIPPS the CARRIER. By R. D. BLACKMORE. Small post 8vo, 6*s*.

"NINETY-THREE." By VICTOR HUGO. Small post 8vo, 6*s*.

MISTRESS JUDITH. A Cambridgeshire Story. By C. C. FRASER-TYTLER. Small post 8vo, 6*s*.

MRS. STOWE'S NOVELS.

OLD TOWN TALK. By HARRIET BEECHER STOWE. 1 vol. small 8vo, 6*s*.

MY WIFE AND I; or, Harry Henderson's History. By HARRIET BEECHER STOWE. Small post 8vo, 6*s*.

WE AND OUR NEIGHBOURS. By HARRIET BEECHER STOWE. Small post 8vo, 6*s*.

NEW BOOKS.

Captain FRED. BURNABY'S New Work, "ON HORSEBACK THROUGH ASIA MINOR," giving an Account of his Ride of Two Thousand Five Hundred Miles in Asia Minor. Will be ready in September, 1877.

NEW IRELAND, by ALEX. M. SULLIVAN, M.P., is the title of a most important work on Ireland and the Irish. Also nearly ready.

Now ready, in large post 8vo, handsomely bound in cloth, gilt edges, 400 pages, price 12*s*. 6*d*. NEW WORK ON FERNS.

THE FERN WORLD. By FRANCIS GEORGE HEATH, Author of "The Fern Paradise," "The English Peasantry," &c. The work is illustrated by Twelve Coloured Plates, giving complete Figures (Sixty-four in all) of every Species of British Fern, specially printed from Nature; by several Full-Page Engravings of some of the choicest Scenery of Devon; and a Permanent Photograph.

Now ready, crown 8vo, leatherette binding, price 10*s*. 6*d*., with Illustrations.

NOTES ON FISH AND FISHING. By J. J. MANLEY, M.A.—CONTENTS: Fishing as a Sport—Fishing as a Fine Art—Fishing, Ancient and Modern—Fishing Tackle—Different Styles of Fishing—The Literature of Fishing—Ichthyology—Modes of Capture and Habits of Trout, Grayling, Jack, Carp, Barbel, Perch, Tench, Bream, Chub, Dace, Roach, &c., &c.—Winter Fishing—Fish Culture—Fish as Food—Fence Months,—Aquaria, &c., &c.

London: SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON, Crown Buildings, 188, Fleet Street, E.C.

A Catalogue of American and Foreign Books Published or Imported by MESSRS. SAMPSON LOW & CO. *can be had on application.*

Crown Buildings, 188, *Fleet Street, London*, *April*, 1877.

A List of Books

PUBLISHED BY

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON.

A CLASSIFIED Educational Catalogue of Works published in Great Britain. Demy 8vo, cloth extra. Second Edition, revised to the year 1877, 5*s.*

Ablett (*H.*) *Reminiscences of an Old Draper.* 1 vol. small post 8vo, 2*s.* 6*d.*

Abney (*Captain W. de W., R.E., F.R.S.*) *Thebes, and its Five* Greater Temples. Forty large permanent photographs, with descriptive letter-press. Super-royal 4to, cloth extra, 63*s.*

Adventures of Captain Mago. A Phœnician's Explorations 1000 years B.C. By LEON CAHUN. Numerous Illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, gilt, 10*s.* 6*d.*

Adventures of a Young Naturalist. By LUCIEN BIART, with 117 beautiful Illustrations on Wood. Edited and adapted by PARKER GILLMORE. Post 8vo, cloth extra, gilt edges, New Edition, 7*s.* 6*d.*

Adventures in New Guinea. The Narrative of the Captivity of a French Sailor, Louis Trégance, for Nine Years among the Savages in the Interior. Small post 8vo, with Illustrations and Map, cloth gilt, 6*s.*

"Captain Lawson's wonderful stories about New Guinea are totally eclipsed by this Narrative of a French sailor."—*Athenæum.*

Africa, and the Brussels Geographical Conference. Translated from the French of EMILE BANNING, by R. H. MAJOR, F.S.A. With Map, crown 8vo, 7*s.* 6*d.*

Alcott (*Louisa M.*) *Aunt Jo's Scrap-Bag.* Square 16mo, 2*s.* 6*d.* (Rose Library, 1*s.*)

——— *Cupid and Chow-Chow.* Small post 8vo, 3*s.* 6*d.*

——— *Little Men: Life at Plumfield with Jo's Boys.* By the Author of "Little Women." Small post 8vo, cloth, gilt edges, 2*s.* 6*d.* (Rose Library, 1*s.*)

——— *Little Women.* 2 vols., 2*s.* 6*d.* each. (Rose Library. 2 vols., 1*s.* each.)

——— *Old-Fashioned Girl.* Best Edition, small post 8vo, cloth extra, gilt edges, 2*s.* 6*d.* (Rose Library, 2*s.*)

Alcott (*Louisa M.*) *Work and Beginning Again.* A Story of Experience. 1 vol., small post 8vo, cloth extra, 6*s.* Several Illustrations. (Rose Library, 2 vols., 1*s.* each.)

——— *Beginning Again.* A Sequel to "Work." 1*s.*

——— *Shawl Straps.* Small post 8vo, cloth extra, gilt, 3*s.* 6*d.*

——— *Eight Cousins; or, the Aunt Hill.* Small post 8vo with Illustrations, 3*s.* 6*d.*

——— *The Rose in Bloom.* Small post 8vo, cloth extra, 3*s.* 6*d.*

——— *Silver Pitchers.* Small post 8vo, cloth extra, 3*s.* 6*d.*

"Miss Alcott's stories are thoroughly healthy, full of racy fun and humour . . . exceedingly entertaining . . . . We can recommend the 'Eight Cousins'"—*Athenæum.*

Andersen (*Hans Christian*) *Fairy Tales.* With Illustrations in Colours by E. V. B. Royal 4to, cloth, 25*s.*

Andrews (*Dr.*) *Latin-English Lexicon.* 14th Edition. Royal 8vo, pp. 1670, cloth extra, price 18*s.*

"The best Latin Dictionary, whether for the scholar or advanced student."—*Spectator.*

"Every page bears the impress of industry and care."—*Athenæum.*

Anecdotes of the Queen and Royal Family. Collected and Edited by J. G. HODGINS, with Illustrations. New Edition, revised by JOHN TIMBS, 5*s.*

Animals Painted by Themselves. Adapted from the French of Balzac, Louis Baude, G. Droz, Jules Janin, E. Lemoine, A. de Musset, Georges Sand, &c., with 200 Illustrations by GRANDVILLE. 8vo, cloth extra, gilt, 10*s.* 6*d.*

Atmosphere (*The*). *See* FLAMMARION.

THE BAYARD SERIES.

Comprising Pleasure Books of Literature produced in the Choicest Style as Companionable Volumes at Home and Abroad.

"We can hardly imagine better books for boys to read or for men to ponder over."—*Times.*

Price 2*s.* 6*d. each Volume, complete in itself, flexible cloth extra, gilt edges, with silk Headbands and Registers.*

The Story of the Chevalier Bayard. By M. DE BERVILLE.

De Joinville's St. Louis, King of France.

The Essays of Abraham Cowley, including all his Prose Works.

Abdallah; or the Four Leaves. By EDOUARD LABOULLAYE.

Table-Talk and Opinions of Napoleon Buonaparte.

Vathek: An Oriental Romance. By WILLIAM BECKFORD.

The King and the Commons. A Selection of Cavalier and Puritan Song. Edited by Prof. MORLEY.

Words of Wellington: Maxims and Opinions of the Great Duke.

Dr. Johnson's Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia. With Notes.

Hazlitt's Round Table. With Biographical Introduction.

The Bayard Series, continued :—

The Religio Medici, Hydriotaphia, and the Letter to a Friend. By Sir THOMAS BROWNE, Knt.

Ballad Poetry of the Affections. By ROBERT BUCHANAN.

Coleridge's Christabel, and other Imaginative Poems. With Preface by ALGERNON C. SWINBURNE.

Lord Chesterfield's Letters, Sentences, and Maxims. With Introduction by the Editor, and Essay on Chesterfield by M. DE STE.-BEUVE, of the French Academy.

Essays in Mosaic. By THOS. BALLANTYNE.

My Uncle Toby; his Story and his Friends. Edited by P. FITZGERALD.

Reflections; or, Moral Sentences and Maxims of the Duke de la Rochefoucauld.

Socrates, Memoirs for English Readers from Xenophon's Memorabilia. By EDW. LEVIEN.

Prince Albert's Golden Precepts.

A suitable Case containing 12 Volumes, price 31s. 6d.; or the Case separately, price 3s. 6d.

BEAUTY and the Beast. An Old Tale told, with Pictures by E. V. B. Demy 4to, cloth extra, novel binding. 10 Illustrations in Colours (in same style as those in the First Edition of "Story without an End"). 12*s.* 6*d.*

Beumer's German Copybooks. In six gradations at 4*d.* each.

Bickersteth's Hymnal Companion to Book of Common Prayer.

A new Edition, with 160 Additional Hymns and numerous new tunes has has been issued; the Original Editions are kept in print. An 8pp. prospectus and price lists will be sent post free on application.

*** *A liberal allowance is made to Clergymen.*

The Church Mission Hymn Book has been recently issued: it contains 120 Hymns for Special Mission and Schoolroom Services, selected, with a few additions, from the Hymnal Companion. Price 8*s.* 4*d.* per 100. or 1½*d.* each.

The Hymnal Companion is also sold, strongly bound with a Sunday-School Liturgy, in two sizes, price 4*d.* and 8*d.*

Bickersteth (Rev. E. H., M.A.) The Reef and other Parables. 1 vol., square 8vo, with numerous very beautiful Engravings, uniform in character with the Illustrated Edition of Heber's Hymns, &c., 7*s.* 6*d.*

——— *The Master's Home-Call; or, Brief Memorials of* Alice Frances Bickersteth. 20th Thousand. 32mo, cloth gilt, 1*s.*

"They recall in a touching manner a character of which the religious beauty has a warmth and grace almost too tender to be definite."—*The Guardian.*

——— *The Shadow of the Rock.* A Selection of Religious Poetry. 18mo, cloth extra, 2*s.* 6*d.*

——— *The Clergyman in his Home.* Small post 8vo, 1*s.*

Bickersteth (*Rev. E. H., M.A.*) *The Shadowed Home and the* Light Beyond. 6th Edition, crown 8vo, cloth extra, 5*s.*

Bida. The Authorized Version of the Four Gospels, with the whole of the magnificent Etchings on Steel, after drawings by M. BIDA, in 4 vols., appropriately bound in cloth extra, price 3*l.* 3*s.* each.
Also the four volumes in two, bound in the best morocco, by Suttaby, extra gilt edges, 18*l.* 18*s.*, half-morocco, 12*l.* 12*s.*

Bidwell (*C. T.*) *The Balearic Islands.* Illustrations and a Map. Crown 8vo, cloth, 10*s.* 6*d.*

——— *The Cost of Living Abroad.* Crown 8vo, 6*s.*

Black (*Wm.*) *Three Feathers.* Small post 8vo, cloth extra, 6*s.*

——— *Lady Silverdale's Sweetheart, and other Stories.* 1 vol., crown 8vo, 10*s.* 6*d.*

——— *Kilmeny: a Novel.* Small post 8vo, cloth, 6*s.*

——— *In Silk Attire.* 3rd edition, small post 8vo, 6*s.*
"A work which deserves a hearty welcome for its skill and power in delineation of character."—*Saturday Review.*

——— *A Daughter of Heth.* 11th Edition, crown 8vo, cloth extra, 6*s.* With Frontispiece by F. Walker, A.R.A.
"If humour, sweetness, and pathos, and a story told with simplicity and vigour, ought to insure success, 'A Daughter of Heth' is of the kind to deserve it."—*Saturday Review.*

Blackmore (*R. D.*) *Lorna Doone.* 10th Edition, cr. 8vo, 6*s.*
"The reader at times holds his breath, so graphically yet so simply does John Ridd tell his tale."—*Saturday Review.*

——— *Alice Lorraine.* 1 vol., small post 8vo, 6*s.*, 6th Edition.

——— *Clara Vaughan.* Revised Edition, 6*s.*

——— *Cradock Nowell.* New Edition, 6*s.*

——— *Cripps the Carrier.* 3rd Edition, small post 8vo, cloth extra, 6*s.*

——— *Georgics of Virgil.* Small 4to, 4*s.* 6*d.*

Blue Banner. Translated from the French of LEON CAHUN. With very numerous Illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, gilt, 10*s.* 6*d.*

Book of the Play. By DUTTON COOK. 2 vols., crown 8vo, 24*s.*

Bowles (*T. G.*) *The Defence of Paris, narrated as it was seen.* 8vo, 14*s.*

Bradford (*Wm.*) *The Arctic Regions.* Illustrated with Photographs, taken on an Art Expedition to Greenland. With Descriptive Narrative by the Artist. In One Volume, royal broadside, 25 inches by 20, beautifully bound in morocco extra, price Twenty-Five Guineas.

Brett (*E.*) *Notes on Yachts.* Fcp., 6*s.*

Bryant (*W. C., assisted by S. H. Gay.*) *A Popular History of* the United States. About 4 vols., to be profusely Illustrated with Engravings on Steel and Wood, after Designs by the best Artists. Vol. I., super-royal 8vo, cloth extra, gilt, 42*s.*, is ready.

Burton (Captain R. F.) Two Trips to Gorilla Land and the Cataracts of the Congo. By Captain R. F. BURTON. 2 vols, demy 8vo, with numerous Illustrations and Map, cloth extra, 28*s.*

Butler (W. F.) The Great Lone Land; an Account of the Red River Expedition, 1869-70, and Subsequent Travels and Adventures in the Manitoba Country, and a Winter Journey across the Saskatchewan Valley to the Rocky Mountains. With Illustrations and Map. Fifth and Cheaper Edition, crown 8vo, cloth extra, 7*s.* 6*d.* (The first Three Editions were in 8vo, cloth, 16*s.*)

——— *The Wild North Land; the Story of a Winter Journey* with Dogs across Northern North America. Demy 8vo, cloth, with numerous Woodcuts and a Map, 4th Edition, 18*s.* Crown 8vo, 7*s.* 6*d.*

——— *Akim-foo: the History of a Failure.* Demy 8vo, cloth, 16*s.*, 2nd Edition. Also, in crown 8vo, 7*s.* 6*d.*

CADOGAN (*Lady A.*) *Illustrated Games of Patience.* Twenty-four Diagrams in Colours, with Descriptive Text. Foolscap 4to, cloth extra, gilt edges, 12*s.* 6*d* 3rd Edition.

Cahun (Leon) Adventures of Captain Mago. *See* "Adventures."

——— *Blue Banner*, which see.

California. *See* NORDHOFF.

Ceramic Art. *See* JACQUEMART.

Changed Cross (The), and other Religious Poems. 2*s.* 6*d.*

Child's Play, with 16 Coloured Drawings by E. V. B. Printed on thick paper, with tints, 7*s.* 6*d.*

——— *New*, which see.

Choice Editions of Choice Books. 2*s.* 6*d.* each, Illustrated by C. W. COPE, R.A., T. CRESWICK, R.A., E. DUNCAN, BIRKET FOSTER, J. C. HORSLEY, A.R.A., G. HICKS, R. REDGRAVE, R.A., C. STONEHOUSE, F. TAYLER, G. THOMAS, H. J. TOWNSHEND, E. H. WEHNERT, HARRISON WEIR, &c.

Bloomfield's Farmer's Boy.	Milton's L'Allegro.
Campbell's Pleasures of Hope.	Poetry of Nature. Harrison Weir.
Coleridge's Ancient Mariner.	Rogers' (Sam.) Pleasures of Memory.
Goldsmith's Deserted Village.	Shakespeare's Songs and Sonnets.
Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield.	Tennyson's May Queen.
Gray's Elegy in a Churchyard.	Elizabethan Poets.
Keat's Eve of St. Agnes.	Wordsworth's Pastoral Poems.

"Such works are a glorious beatification for a poet."—*Athenæum.*

Clara Vaughan. Revised Edition, 6*s.* *See* BLACKMORE.

Cook (D.) Young Mr. Nightingale. A Novel. 3 vols., 31*s.* 6*d.*

——— *The Banns of Marriage.* 2 vols., crown 8vo, 21*s.*

——— *Book of the Play.* 2 vols., crown 8vo, 24*s.*

Cradock Nowell. New Edition, 6*s.* *See* BLACKMORE.

Cripps the Carrier. 3rd Edition, 6*s.* *See* BLACKMORE.

Cruise of H.M.S. "Challenger" (The). By W. J. J. SPRY, R.N. With Route Map and many Illustrations. 4th Edition. In 1 vol., demy 8vo, cloth extra, price 18*s.*

"The book before us supplies the former information in a manner that leaves little to be desired. 'The Cruise of H M.S. *Challenger*' is an exceedingly well-written, entertaining, and instructive book."—*United Service Gazette.*

"Agreeably written, full of information, and copiously illustrated."—*Broad Arrow.*

Cumming (Miss C. F. G.) From the Hebrides to the Himalayas; Eighteen Months' Wanderings in Western Isles and Eastern Highlands. By Miss CONSTANCE F. GORDON CUMMING, with very numerous Full-page and other Woodcut Illustrations, from the Author's own Drawings. 2 vols., medium 8vo, cloth extra, 42*s.*

DANA (R. H.) Two Years before the Mast and Twenty-four years After. Revised Edition with Notes, 12mo, 6*s.*

Dana (Jas. D.) Corals and Coral Islands. Numerous Illustrations, charts, &c. New and Cheaper Edition, with numerous important Additions and Corrections. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, 8*s.* 6*d.*

"Professed geologists and zoologists, as well as general readers, will find Professor Dana's book in every way worthy of their attention."—*The Athenæum.*

Daughter (A) of Heth. By WILLIAM BLACK. 13th and cheaper Edition. 1 vol., crown 8vo, 6*s.*

Day of my Life (A); or, Every Day Experiences at Eton. By an ETON BOY. Super-royal 16mo, cloth extra, 2*s.* 6*d.* Second Edition.

Discoveries of Prince Henry the Navigator, and their Results; being the Narrative of the Discovery by Sea, within One Century, of more than Half the World. By RICHARD HENRY MAJOR, F.S.A. Demy 8vo, with several Woodcuts, 4 Maps, and a Portrait of Prince Henry in Colours. Cloth extra, 15*s.*

"Mr. R. H. Major has supplied a serious gap in our biographical literature. . . . . One of the most interesting volumes of biography we have yet had under review."—*Daily Telegraph.*

Dodge (Mrs. M.) Hans Brinker; or, the Silver Skates. An entirely New Edition, with 59 Full-page and other Woodcuts. Square crown 8vo, cloth extra, 7*s.* 6*d.*; Text only, paper, 1*s.*

——— *Theophilus and Others.* 1 vol., small post 8vo, cloth extra, gilt, 3*s.* 6*d.*

ECHOES of the Heart. *See* MOODY.

English Catalogue of Books (The). Published during 1863 to 1871 inclusive, comprising also the Important American Publications.

This Volume, occupying over 450 Pages, shows the Titles of 32,000 New Books and New Editions issued during Nine Years, with the Size, Price, and Publisher's Name, the Lists of Learned Societies, Printing Clubs, and other Literary Associations, and the Books issued by them; as also the Publisher's Series and Collections—altogether forming an indispensable adjunct to the Bookseller's

Establishment, as well as to every Learned and Literary Club and Association, 30*s.* half-bound.

*** The previous Volume, 1835 to 1862, of which very few remain on sale, price 2*l.* 5*s.*; as also the Index Volume, 1837 to 1857, price 1*l.* 6*s.*

English Catalogue of Books (The). Supplements, 1863, 1864, 1865, 3*s.* 6*d.* each; 1866, 1867 to 1876, 5*s.* each.

Eight Cousins. See ALCOTT.

English Painters of the Georgian Era. Hogarth to Turner. Biographical Notices. Illustrated with 48 permanent Photographs, after the most celebrated Works. Demy 4to, cloth extra, 18*s.*

Erckmann-Chatrian. Forest House and Catherine's Lovers. Crown 8vo, 3*s.* 6*d.*

——— *The Brothers Rantzau: a Story of the Vosges.* 2 vols., crown 8vo, cloth, 21*s.* New Edition, 1 vol., profusely Illustrated, cloth extra, 5*s.*

Evans (C.) Over the Hills and Far Away. By C. EVANS, Author of "A Strange Friendship." One Volume, crown 8vo, cloth extra, 10*s.* 6*d.*

——— *A Strange Friendship.* Crown 8vo, cloth, 5*s.*

FAITH GARTNEY'S Girlhood. By the Author of "The Gayworthys." Fcap. with Coloured Frontispiece, 3*s.* 6*d.*

Familiar Letters on some Mysteries of Nature. See PHIPSON.

Few (A) Hints on Proving Wills. Enlarged Edition, 1*s.*

Fish and Fishing. By J. J. MANLEY, M.A. Crown 8vo, with Illustrations, 10*s.* 6*d.*

Five Weeks in Greece. By J. F. YOUNG. Crown 8vo, 10*s.* 6*d.*

Flammarion (C.) The Atmosphere. Translated from the French of CAMILLE FLAMMARION. Edited by JAMES GLAISHER, F.R.S., Superintendent of the Magnetical and Meteorological Department of the Royal Observatory at Greenwich. With 10 Chromo-Lithographs and 81 Woodcuts. Royal 8vo, cloth extra, 30*s.*

Footsteps of the Master, 6*s. See* STOWE (MRS. BEECHER).

Forrest (John) Explorations in Australia; being MR. JOHN FORREST'S Personal Account of his Journeys. 1 vol., demy 8vo, cloth, with several Illustrations from the Author's Sketches, drawn on wood by G. F. Angas, and 3 Maps, 16*s.*

Forrest's (R. W.) Gleanings from the Pastures of Tekoa. By the Rev. R. W. FORREST, M.A., Vicar of St. Jude's, South Kensington. 1 vol., small post 8vo, 260 pp., cloth extra, 6*s.*

Fowler (R. Nicholas, M.A.). See Visit to Japan, China, &c.

Franc (Maude Jeane) Emily's Choice, an Australian Tale. 1 vol., small post 8vo. With a Frontispiece by G. F. ANGAS, 5*s.*

——— *Hall's Vineyard.* Small post 8vo, cloth, 4*s.*

Franc (*Maude Jeane*) *John's Wife: a Story of Life in South* Australia. Small post 8vo, cloth extra, 4*s.*

——— *Marian; or, the Light of Some One's Home.* Fcap. 8vo, 3rd Edition, with Frontispiece, 5*s.*

——— *Silken Cords and Iron Fetters.* 4*s.*

——— *Vermont Vale.* Small post 8vo., with Frontispiece, 5*s.*

——— *Minnie's Mission.* Small post 8vo, with Frontispiece, 4*s.*

GAMES of Patience. *See* CADOGAN.

Garvagh (*Lord*) *The Pilgrim of Scandinavia.* By LORD GARVAGH, B.A., Christ Church, Oxford, and Member of the Alpine Club. 8vo, cloth extra, with Illustrations, 10*s.* 6*d.*

Gayworthys (*The*): *a Story of New England Life.* Small post 8vo, 3*s.* 6*d.*

Gentle Life (Queen Edition). 2 vols. in 1, small 4to, 10*s.* 6*d.*

THE GENTLE LIFE SERIES

Printed in Elzevir, on Toned Paper, handsomely bound, forming suitable Volumes for Presents. Price 6*s.* each; or in calf extra, price 10*s.* 6*d.*

The Gentle Life. Essays in aid of the Formation of Character of Gentlemen and Gentlewomen. 21st Edition.

"Deserves to be printed in letters of gold, and circulated in every house."—*Chambers' Journal.*

About in the World. Essays by the Author of "The Gentle Life."

"It is not easy to open it at any page without finding some handy idea."—*Morning Post.*

Like unto Christ. A New Translation of Thomas à Kempis' "De Imitatione Christi." With a Vignette from an Original Drawing by Sir THOMAS LAWRENCE. 2nd Edition.

"Could not be presented in a more exquisite form, for a more sightly volume was never seen."—*Illustrated London News.*

Familiar Words. An Index Verborum, or Quotation Handbook. Affording an immediate Reference to Phrases and Sentences that have become embedded in the English language. 3rd and enlarged Edition.

"The most extensive dictionary of quotation we have met with."—*Notes and Queries.*

Essays by Montaigne. Edited, Compared, Revised, and Annotated by the Author of "The Gentle Life." With Vignette Portrait. 2nd Edition.

"We should be glad if any words of ours could help to bespeak a large circulation for this handsome attractive book."—*Illustrated Times.*

The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia. Written by Sir PHILIP SIDNEY. Edited, with Notes, by the Author of "The Gentle Life." Dedicated, by permission, to the Earl of Derby. 7*s.* 6*d.*

"All the best things in the Arcadia are retained intact in Mr. Friswell's edition." *Examiner.*

The Gentle Life Series, continued:—

The Gentle Life. 2nd Series, 8th Edition.

"There is not a single thought in the volume that does not contribute in some measure to the formation of a true gentleman."—*Daily News.*

Varia: Readings from Rare Books. Reprinted, by permission, from the *Saturday Review*, *Spectator*, &c.

"The books discussed in this volume are no less valuable than they are rare, and the compiler is entitled to the gratitude of the public."—*Observer.*

The Silent Hour: Essays, Original and Selected. By the Author of "The Gentle Life." 3rd Edition.

"All who possess "The Gentle Life" should own this volume."—*Standard.*

Half-Length Portraits. Short Studies of Notable Persons. By GIBSON CRAIG. Small post 8vo, cloth extra, 6*s.*

Essays on English Writers, for the Self-improvement of Students in English Literature.

"To all (both men and women) who have neglected to read and study their native literature we would certainly suggest the volume before us as a fitting introduction."—*Examiner.*

Other People's Windows. By J. HAIN FRISWELL. 3rd Edition.

"The chapters are so lively in themselves, so mingled with shrewd views of human nature, so full of illustrative anecdotes, that the reader cannot fail to be amused."—*Morning Post.*

A Man's Thoughts. By J. HAIN FRISWELL.

German Primer; being an Introduction to First Steps in German. By M. T. PREU. 2*s.* 6*d.*

Getting On in the World; or, Hints on Success in Life. By WILLIAM MATHEWS, LL.D. Small post 8vo, cloth extra, 2*s.* 6*d.*; gilt edges, 3*s.* 6*d.*

Gleams through the Mists; Literary and Domestic. By C. BICKERSTETH WHEELER, Author of "John Lang Bickersteth," "Memorials of a Beloved Mother," "Taking the Consequences," &c. 1 vol., post 8vo, cloth extra, 3*s.* 6*d.*

Gouffé. The Royal Cookery Book. By JULES GOUFFÉ; translated and adapted for English use by ALPHONSE GOUFFÉ, Head Pastrycook to Her Majesty the Queen. Illustrated with large plates printed in colours. 161 Woodcuts, 8vo, cloth extra, gilt edges, 2*l.* 2*s.*

——— Domestic Edition, half-bound, 10*s.* 6*d.*

"By far the ablest and most complete work on cookery that has ever been submitted to the gastronomical world."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

——— *The Book of Preserves;* or, Receipts for Preparing and Preserving Meat, Fish salt and smoked, Terrines, Gelatines, Vegetables, Fruit, Confitures, Syrups, Liqueurs de Famille, Petits Fours, Bonbons, &c., &c. 1 vol., royal 8vo, containing upwards of 500 Receipts and 34 Illustrations, 10*s.* 6*d.*

——— *Royal Book of Pastry and Confectionery.* By JULES GOUFFÉ, Chef-de Cuisine of the Paris Jockey Club. Royal 8vo, Illustrated with 10 Chromo-lithographs and 137 Woodcuts, from Drawings by E. MONJAT. Cloth extra, gilt edges, 35*s.*

Gouraud (Mdlle.) Four Gold Pieces. Numerous Illustrations. Small post 8vo, cloth, 2*s.* 6*d.* *See also* Rose Library.

Gower (Lord Ronald) Handbook to the Art Galleries, Public and Private, of Belgium and Holland. 18mo, cloth, 5*s.*

——— *The Castle Howard Portraits.* 2 vols., folio, cl. extra, 6*l.* 6*s.*

Greek Grammar. *See* WALLER.

Greek Testament. *See* Novum Testamentum.

Guizot's History of France. Translated by ROBERT BLACK. Super-royal 8vo, very numerous Full-page and other Illustrations. In 5 vols., cloth extra, gilt, each 24*s.*

"It supplies a want which has long been felt, and ought to be in the hands of all students of history."—*Times.*

"Three-fourths of M. Guizot's great work are now completed, and the 'History of France,' which was so nobly planned, has been hitherto no less admirably executed."—*From long Review of Vol. III. in the Times.*

"M. Guizot's main merit is this, that, in a style at once clear and vigorous, he sketches the essential and most characteristic features of the times and personages described, and seizes upon every salient point which can best illustrate and bring out to view what is most significant and instructive in the spirit of the age described."—*Evening Standard*, Sept 23, 1874.

"We must, in conclusion, say a word as to Mr. Black's translation, which is at once idiomatic and spirited."—*Echo.*

——— *History of England.* In 3 vols. of about 500 pp. each, containing 60 to 70 full-page and other Illustrations, cloth extra, gilt, 24*s.* each.

"For luxury of typography, plainness of print, and beauty of illustration, these volumes, of which but one has as yet appeared in English, will hold their own against any production of an age so luxurious as our own in everything, typography not excepted."—*Times.*

Guillemin. *See* World of Comets.

Guyot (A.) Physical Geography. By ARNOLD GUYOT, Author of "Earth and Man." In 1 volume, large 4to, 128 pp., numerous coloured Diagrams, Maps, and Woodcuts, price 10*s.* 6*d.*

HACKLANDER (F. W.) Bombardier H. and Corporal Dose; or, Military Life in Prussia. Translated from the German of F. W. HACKLANDER. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, 5*s.*

Handbook to the Charities of London. *See* Low's.

——— *Principal Schools of England.* *See* Practical.

Half-Length Portraits. Short Studies of Notable Persons. By GIBSON CRAIG. Small post 8vo, cloth extra, 6*s.*

Hall (S. P.) Sketches from an Artist's Portfolio. *See* Sketches.

Hall (W. W.) How to Live Long; or, 1408 *Health Maxims,* Physical, Mental, and Moral. By W. W. HALL, A.M., M.D. Small post 8vo, cloth, 2*s.* Second Edition.

"We can cordially commend it to all who wish to possess the *mens sana in corpore sano.*"—*Standard.*

Hans Brinker; or, the Silver Skates. *See* DODGE.

Hazard (S.) Santo Domingo, Past and Present; with a Glance at Hayti. With upwards of 150 beautiful Woodcuts and Maps, demy 8vo, cloth extra, 18*s.*

Hazard (*S.*) *Cuba with Pen and Pencil.* Over 300 Fine Wood-cut Engravings. New Edition, 8vo, cloth extra, 15*s.*

Hazlitt (*William*) *The Round Table.* BAYARD SERIES, 2*s.* 6*d.*

Healy (*M.*) *Lakeville.* 3 vols., 1*l.* 11*s.* 6*d.*

——— *A Summer's Romance.* Crown 8vo, cloth, 10*s.* 6*d.*

——— *The Home Theatre.* Small post 8vo, 3*s.* 6*d.*

——— *Out of the World.* A Novel. 3 vols., 31*s.* 6*d.*

——— *Storm Driven.* 3 vols., crown 8vo, 31*s.* 6*d.*

"We are glad to recommend 'Storm-Driven' as one of the books to be read."—*Vanity Fair.*

Heber's (*Bishop*) *Illustrated Edition of Hymns.* With upwards of 100 beautiful Engravings. Small 4to, handsomely bound, 7*s.* 6*d.* Morocco, 18*s.* 6*d.* and 21*s.*

Hector Servadac. See VERNE.

Henderson (*A.*) *Latin Proverbs and Quotations;* with Translations and Parallel Passages, and a copious English Index. By ALFRED HENDERSON. Fcap. 4to, 530 pp., 10*s.* 6*d.*

Hitherto. By the Author of "The Gayworthys." New Edition, cloth extra, 3*s.* 6*d.* Also in Rose Library, 2 vols., 2*s.*

Hofmann (*Carl*) *A Practical Treatise on the Manufacture of* Paper in all its Branches. Illustrated by 110 Wood Engravings, and 5 large Folding Plates. In 1 vol., 4to, cloth; about 400 pages, 3*l.* 13*s.* 6*d.*

How to Live Long. See HALL.

Hugo (*Victor*) "*Ninety-Three.*" Translated by FRANK LEE BENEDICT and J. HAIN FRISWELL. New Edition. Illustrated. One vol, crown 8vo, 6*s.*

——— *Toilers of the Sea.* Crown 8vo. Illustrated, 6*s.*; fancy boards, 2*s.*; cloth, 2*s.* 6*d.*; On large paper with all the original Illustrations, 10*s.* 6*d.*

Hymnal Companion to Book of Common Prayer. See Bickersteth.

ILLUSTRATIONS of China and its People. By J. THOMSON, F.R.G.S. Being Photographs from the Author's Negatives, printed in permanent Pigments by the Autotype Process, and Notes from Personal Observation.

*** The complete work embraces 200 Photographs, with Letter-press Descriptions of the Places and People represented. Four Volumes imperial 4to, each £3 3*s.*

Is that All? By a well-known American Author. Small post 8vo, cloth extra, 3*s.* 6*d.*

Jacquemart (*A.*) *History of the Ceramic Art:* Descriptive and Analytical Study of the Potteries of all Times and of all Nations. By ALBERT JACQUEMART. 200 Woodcuts by H. Catenacci and J. Jacquemart. 12 Steel-plate Engravings, and 1000 Marks and Mono-

grams. Translated by Mrs. BURY PALLISER. In 1 vol., super-royal 8vo, of about 700 pp., cloth extra, gilt edges, 42*s*.

"This is one of those few gift-books which, while they can certainly lie on a table and look beautiful, can also be read through with real pleasure and profit."—*Times*.

Johnson (*R. B.*) *Very Far West Indeed.* A few rough Experiences on the North-West Pacific Coast. Crown 8vo, cloth, 10*s*. 6*d*. New Edition—the 4th, fancy boards, 2*s*.

KENNEDY'S (*Capt. W. R.*) *Sporting Adventures in the* Pacific. With Illustrations, demy 8vo, 18*s*.

King (*Clarence*) *Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada.* Crown 8vo. 3rd and Cheaper Edition, cloth extra, 6*s*.

Kingston (*W. H. G.*). *See* SNOW-SHOES.

Koldewey (*Capt.*) *The Second North German Polar Expedition* in the Year 1869-70, of the Ships "Germania" and "Hansa," under command of Captain Koldewey. Edited and condensed by H. W. BATES, Esq. Numerous Woodcuts, Maps, and Chromo-lithographs. Royal 8vo, cloth extra, 1*l*. 15*s*.

LEARED (*A.*) *Morocco and the Moors.* Being an Account of Travels, with a Description of the Country and its People. By ARTHUR LEARED, M.D., Member of the Royal Irish Academy, and of the Icelandic Literary Society. With Illustrations, 8vo, cloth extra, 18*s*.

Le Duc (*V.*) *How to build a House.* By VIOLLET-LE-DUC, Author of "The Dictionary of Architecture," &c. Numerous Illustrations, Plans, &c. 1 vol., medium 8vo, cloth, gilt edges. 2nd Edition, 12*s*.

——— *Annals of a Fortress.* Numerous Illustrations and Diagrams. Demy 8vo, cloth extra, 15*s*.

——— *The Habitations of Man in all Ages.* By E. VIOLLET-LE-DUC. Illustrated by 103 Woodcuts. Translated by BENJAMIN BUCKNALL, Architect. 8vo, cloth extra, 16*s*.

——— *Lectures on Architecture.* By VIOLLET-LE-DUC. Translated from the French by BENJAMIN BUCKNALL, Architect. In 2 vols., royal 8vo, 3*l*. 3*s*. Also in Parts 10*s*. 6*d*. each.

——— *On Restoration.* By VIOLLET-LE-DUC, with a Notice of his Works in connexion with the Historical Monuments of France. By CHARLES WETHERED. Crown 8vo, with a Portrait on Steel of VIOLLET-LE-DUC, cloth extra, 2*s*. 6*d*.

Lindsay (*W. S.*) *History of Merchant Shipping and Ancient* Commerce. Over 150 Illustrations, Maps and Charts. In 4 vols., demy 8vo, cloth extra. Vols. 1 and 2, 21*s*. each; vols. 3 and 4, 24*s*. each; 4 vols., 4*l*. 10*s*.

"Another standard work."—*Times*.

Lion Jack: a Story of Perilous Adventures amongst Wild Men and Beasts. Showing how Menageries are made. By P. T. BARNUM. With Illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, price 6*s*.

Little King: or, the Taming of a Young Russian Count. By S. BLANDY. Translated from the French. 64 Illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, gilt, 7*s.* 6*d.*

"There is a great deal worth reading in this book."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

"A very pleasant and interesting volume, which we would recommend to our readers."—*Spectator.*

Locker (A.) The Village Surgeon. A Fragment of Autobiography. By ARTHUR LOCKER, Author of "Sweet Seventeen." Crown 8vo, cloth. New Edition, 3*s.* 6*d.*

Long (Col. C. Chaillé) Central Africa. Naked Truths of Naked People: an Account of Expeditions to Lake Victoria Nyanza and the Mabraka Niam-Niam, West of the White Nile. Demy 8vo, numerous Illustrations, 18*s.*

Low's German Series.

The attention of the Heads of Colleges and Schools is directed to this New Series of German School Books, which has been projected with a view to supply a long-felt want, viz., thoroughly reliable Text-Books, edited by German scholars of the highest reputation, at a price which will bring them within the reach of all. The Series comprises:—

1. **The Illustrated German Primer.** Being the easiest introduction to the study of German for all beginners. 1*s.*
2. **The Children's own German Book.** A Selection of Amusing and Instructive Stories in Prose. Edited by Dr. A. L. MEISSNER, Professor of Modern Languages in the Queen's University in Ireland. Small post 8vo, cloth, 1*s.* 6*d.*
3. **The First German Reader, for Children from Ten to** Fourteen. Edited by Dr. A. L. MEISSNER. Small post 8vo, cloth, 1*s.* 6*d.*
4. **The Second German Reader.** Edited by Dr. A. L. MEISSNER, Small post 8vo, cloth, 1*s.* 6*d.*

Buchheim's Deutsche Prosa. Two Volumes, sold separately:—

5. **Schiller's Prosa.** Containing Selections from the Prose Works of Schiller, with Notes for English Students. By Dr. BUCHHEIM, Professor of the German Language and Literature, King's College, London. Small post 8vo, 2*s.* 6*d.*
6. **Goethe's Prosa.** Containing Selections from the Prose Works of Goethe, with Notes for English Students. By Dr. BUCHHEIM. Small post 8vo, 3*s.* 6*d.*

Low's Standard Library of Travel and Adventure. Crown 8vo, bound uniformly in cloth extra, price 7*s.* 6*d.*

1. **The Great Lone Land.** By W. F. BUTLER, C.B.
2. **The Wild North Land.** By W. F. BUTLER, C.B.
3. **How I found Livingstone,** By H. M. STANLEY.
4. **The Threshold of the Unknown Region.** By C. R. MARKHAM. (4th Edition, with Additional Chapters, 10*s.* 6*d.*)
5. **A Whaling Cruise to Baffin's Bay and the Gulf of Boothia.** By A. H. MARKHAM.
6. **Campaigning on the Oxus.** By J. A. MACGAHAN.
7. **Akim-foo: the History of a Failure.** By MAJOR W. F. BUTLER, C.B.

Low's Standard Novels. Crown 8vo, 6*s.* each, cloth extra.

Three Feathers. By WILLIAM BLACK.
A Daughter of Heth. 13th Edition. By W. BLACK. With Frontispiece by F. WALKER, A.R.A.
Kilmeny. A Novel. By W. BLACK.
In Silk Attire. By W. BLACK.
Alice Lorraine. By R. D. BLACKMORE.
Lorna Doone. By R. D. BLACKMORE. 8th Edition.
Cradock Nowell. By R. D. BLACKMORE.
Clara Vaughan. By R. D. BLACKMORE.
Cripps the Carrier. By R. D. BLACKMORE.
Innocent. By Mrs. OLIPHANT. Eight Illustrations.
Work. A Story of Experience. By LOUISA M. ALCOTT. Illustrations. *See also* "Rose Library."
Mistress Judith. A Cambridgeshire Story. By C. C. FRAZER-TYTLER.
Never Again. By Dr. MAYO, Author of "Kaloolah."
Ninety-Three. By VICTOR HUGO. Numerous Illustrations.
My Wife and I. By Mrs. BEECHER STOWE.

Low's Handbook to the Charities of London for 1877. Edited and revised to February, 1877, by C. MACKESON, F.S.S., Editor of "A Guide to the Churches of London and its Suburbs," &c. 1*s.*

MACGAHAN (J. A.) Campaigning on the Oxus, and the Fall of Khiva. With Map and numerous Illustrations, 4th Edition, small post 8vo, cloth extra, 7*s.* 6*d.*

——— *Under the Northern Lights; or, the Cruise of the* "Pandora" to Peel's Straits, in Search of Sir John Franklin's Papers. With Illustrations by Mr. DE WYLDE, who accompanied the Expedition. Demy 8vo, cloth extra, 18*s.*

Macgregor (John) "Rob Roy" on the Baltic. 3rd Edition, small post 8vo, 2*s.* 6*d.*

——— *A Thousand Miles in the "Rob Roy" Canoe.* 11th Edition, small post 8vo, 2*s.* 6*d.*

——— *Description of the "Rob Roy" Canoe,* with Plans, &c., 1*s.*

——— *The Voyage Alone in the Yawl "Rob Roy."* 2nd Edition, small post 8vo, 5*s.*

Markham (A. H.) The Cruise of the "Rosario." By A. H. MARKHAM, Commander, R.N.) 8vo, cloth extra, with Map and Illustrations.

——— *A Whaling Cruise to Baffin's Bay and the Gulf of* Boothia. With an Account of the Rescue, by his Ship, of the Survivors of the Crew of the "Polaris;" and a Description of Modern Whale Fishing. 3rd and Cheaper Edition, crown 8vo, 2 Maps and several Illustrations, cloth extra, 7*s.* 6*d.*

Markham (*C. R.*) *The Threshold of the Unknown Region.* Crown 8vo, with Four Maps, 4th Edition, with Additional Chapters, giving the History of our present Expedition as far as known, and an Account of the Cruise of the "Pandora." Cloth extra, 10*s.* 6*d.*

Maury (*Commander*) *Physical Geography of the Sea, and its* Meteorology. Being a Reconstruction and Enlargement of his former Work, with Charts and Diagrams. New Edition, crown 8vo, 6*s.*

Price 1*s.* 6*d.*, *a New Monthly Periodical,*

Men of Mark: a Gallery of Contemporary Portraits of the most Eminent Men of the Day taken from Life.

Michael Strogoff. 10*s.* 6*d.* *See* VERNE.

Mistress Judith. A Cambridgeshire Story. By C. C. FRASER-TYTLER, Author of "Jasmine Leigh" A New and Cheaper Edition in 1 vol., small post 8vo, cloth extra, 6*s.*

Mohr (*E.*) *To the Victoria Falls of the Zambesi.* By EDWARD MOHR. Translated by N. D'ANVÉRS. Numerous Full-page and other Woodcut Illustrations, four beautiful Chromo-lithographs and a Map. 1 vol., demy 8vo, cloth extra, 24*s.*

Mongolia, Travels in. *See* PREJAVALSKY.

Montaigne's Essays. *See* GENTLE LIFE SERIES.

Moody (*Emma*) *Echoes of the Heart.* A Collection of upwards of 200 Sacred Poems. 16mo, cloth, gilt edges, price 3*s.* 6*d.*

Morocco, Adventures in. *See* ROHLF.

——— *and the Moors.* *See* LEARED.

NAPOLEON I., Recollections of. By MRS. ABELL. 3rd Edition. Revised, with additional matter by her daughter, Mrs. CHARLES JOHNSTONE. Demy 8vo, with Steel Portrait and Woodcuts, cloth extra, gilt edges, 10*s.* 6*d.*

Napoleon III. in Exile. The Posthumous Works and Unpublished Autographs. Collected and arranged by COUNT DE LA CHAPELLE. 8vo, cloth extra, 14*s.*

New Testament. The Authorized English Version; with the various readings from the most celebrated Manuscripts, including the Sinaitic, the Vatican, and the Alexandrian MSS., in English. With Notes by the Editor, Dr. TISCHENDORF. Revised and carefully collected for the Thousandth Volume of Baron Tauchnitz's Collection. Cloth flexible, gilt edges, 2*s.* 6*d.*; cheaper style, 2*s.*; or sewed, 1*s.* 6*d.*

Notes and Sketches of an Architect taken during a Journey in the North-West of Europe. Translated from the French of FELIX NARJOUX. 214 Full-page and other Illustrations. Demy 8vo, cloth extra, 16*s.*

"His book is vivacious and sometimes brilliant. It is admirably printed and illustrated."—*British Quarterly Review.*

Nothing to Wear, and Two Millions. By WILLIAM ALLEN BUTLER. 1*s.*

Novum Testamentum Græce. Edidit OSCAR DE GEBHARDT. 18mo, cloth, 3*s.* 6*d.*

OLD-Fashioned Girl. See ALCOTT.

Old Masters. Da Vinci, Bartolomeo, Michael Angelo, Romagna, Carlo Dolci, &c., &c. Reproduced in Photography from the Celebrated Engravings by Longhi, Anderloni, Garavaglia, Toschi, and Raimondi, in the Collection of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum, with Biographical Notices, by STEPHEN THOMPSON. Imperial folio, cloth extra, *3l. 13s. 6d.*

Oleographs. Catalogue and price lists post free on application.

Oliphant (Mrs.) Innocent. A Tale of Modern Life. By Mrs. OLIPHANT, Author of "The Chronicles of Carlingford," &c., &c. With Eight full-page Illustrations, small post 8vo, cloth extra, *6s.*

Our Little Ones in Heaven. Edited by the Rev. H. ROBBINS. With Frontispiece after Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS. Fcap. cloth extra, New Edition, the 3rd, with Illustrations, *5s.*

PAINTERS of All Schools. By LOUIS VIARDOT, and other Writers. 500 pp., super-royal 8vo, 20 Full-page and 70 smaller Engravings, cloth extra, *25s.*

"A handsome volume, full of information and sound criticism."—*Times.*

"Almost an encyclopædia of painting. . . . . It may be recommended as a handy and elegant guide to beginners in the study of the history of art."—*Saturday Review.*

Palliser (Mrs.) A History of Lace, from the Earliest Period. A New and Revised Edition, with additional cuts and text, upwards of 100 Illustrations and coloured Designs. 1 vol. 8vo, *1l. 1s.* 3rd Edition.

"One of the most readable books of the season; permanently valuable, always interesting, often amusing, and not inferior in all the essentials of a gift book."—*Times.*

——— *Historic Devices, Badges, and War Cries.* 8vo, *1l. 1s.*

——— *The China Collector's Pocket Companion.* With upwards of 1000 Illustrations of Marks and Monograms. 2nd Edition, with Additions. Small post 8vo, limp cloth, *5s.*

"We scarcely need add that a more trustworthy and convenient handbook does not exist, and that others besides ourselves will feel grateful to Mrs. Palliser for the care and skill she has bestowed upon it."—*Academy.*

Parisian Family. From the French of Madame GUIZOT DE WITT. Fcap., *5s.*

Phelps (Miss) Gates Ajar. 32mo, *6d.*

——— *Men, Women, and Ghosts.* 12mo, sewed, *1s. 6d.*; cl., *2s.*

——— *Hedged In.* 12mo, sewed, *1s. 6d.*; cloth, *2s.*

——— *Silent Partner.* *5s.*

——— *Trotty's Wedding Tour.* Small post 8vo, *3s. 6d.*

——— *What to Wear.* Fcap. 8vo, fancy boards, *1s.*

Phillips (L.) Dictionary of Biographical Reference. 8vo, *1l. 11s. 6d.*

Phipson (Dr. T. L.) Familiar Letters on some Mysteries of Nature and Discoveries in Science. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, *7s. 6d.*

Photography (*History and Handbook of*). *See* TISSANDIER.

Picture Gallery of British Art (*The*). 38 Beautiful and Permanent Photographs after the most celebrated English Painters. With Descriptive Letterpress. Vols. 1 to 5, cloth extra, 18*s.* each. Each separate and complete in itself.

*** *For particulars of the Monthly Parts, see page* 46.

Pike (*N.*) *Sub-Tropical Rambles in the Land of the Aphanapteryx.* In 1 vol., demy 8vo, 18*s.* Profusely Illustrated from the Author's own Sketches. Also with Maps and Meteorological Charts.

Plutarch's Lives. An Entirely New and Library Edition. Edited by A. H. CLOUGH, Esq. 5 vols., 8vo, 2*l.* 10*s.*; half-morocco, gilt top, 3*l.* Also in 1 vol., royal 8vo, 800 pp., cloth extra, 18*s.* half-bound, 21*s.*

——— *Morals.* Uniform with Clough's Edition of "Lives of Plutarch." Edited by Professor GOODWIN. 5 vols., 8vo, 3*l.* 3*s.*

Poems of the Inner Life. A New Edition, Revised, with many additional Poems, inserted by permission of the Authors. Small post 8vo, cloth, 5*s.*

Polar Expeditions. *See* KOLDEWEY and MARKHAM.

Practical (*A*) *Handbook to the Principal Schools of England.* By C. E. PASCOE. Showing the cost of living at the Great Schools, Scholarships, &c., &c. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, 3*s.* 6*d.*

"This is an exceedingly useful work, and one that was much wanted."—*Examiner.*

Preces Veterum. Collegit et edidit Joannes F. France. Crown 8vo, cloth, red edges, 5*s.*

Prejevalsky (*N. M.*) *Travels in Mongolia.* By N. M. PREJEVALSKY, Lieutenant-Colonel, Russian Staff. Translated by E. DELMAR MORGAN, F.R.G.S., and Annotated by Colonel YULE, C.B. 2 vols., demy 8vo, cloth extra, numerous Illustrations and Maps, 2*l.* 2*s.*

Preu (*M. T.*) *German Primer.* Square cloth, 2*s.* 6*d.*

Price (*Sir Rose, Bart.*). *See* The Two Americas.

Publishers' Circular (*The*), *and General Record of British and* Foreign Literature. Giving a transcript of the title-page of every work published in Great Britain, and every work of interest published abroad, with lists of all the publishing-houses.

Published on the 1st and 15th of every Month, and forwarded post free to all parts of the world on payment of 8*s.* per annum.

Purdy (*W.*) *The City Life, a Review of Finance and Commerce.* Crown 8vo, cloth, 7*s.* 6*d.*

RALSTON (*W. R. S.*) *Early Russian History.* Four Lectures delivered at Oxford by W. R. S. RALSTON, M.A. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, 5*s.*

Read (*S.*) *Leaves from a Sketch Book.* Pencillings of Travel at Home and Abroad. By SAMUEL READ. Royal 4to, containing about 130 Engravings on Wood, cloth extra, 25*s.*

"We do not think that the season is likely to yield a more artistic, suggestive, and beautiful gift-book than this."—*Nonconformist.*

Retzsch (M.) Outlines to Burger's Ballads. 15 Etchings by MORITZ RETZSCH. With Text, Explanations, and Notes. Oblong 4to, cloth extra, 10*s.* 6*d.*

——— *Outlines to Goethe's Faust.* Etchings by MORITZ RETZSCH. 26 Etchings. Oblong 4to, cloth extra, 10*s.* 6*d.*

——— *Outlines to Schiller's "Fight with the Dragon," and* "Fridolin." 26 Etchings by MORITZ RETZSCH. Oblong 4to, cloth extra, 10*s.* 6*d.*

——— *Outlines to Schiller's "Lay of the Bell."* Comprising 42 Etchings engraved by MORITZ RETZSCH. With Lord Lytton's Translation. New Edition. Oblong 4to, cloth extra, 10*s.* 6*d.*

Rose in Bloom. See ALCOTT.

Rose Library (The). Popular Literature of all countries. Each volume, 1*s.*; cloth, 2*s.* 6*d.* Many of the Volumes are Illustrated. The following is a list :—

1. **Sea-Gull Rock.** By JULES SANDEAU. Illustrated.
2. **Little Women.** By LOUISA M. ALCOTT.
3. **Little Women Wedded.** Forming a Sequel to "Little Women."
4. **The House on Wheels.** By MADAME DE STOLZ. Illustrated.
5. **Little Men.** By LOUISA M. ALCOTT.
6. **The Old-Fashioned Girl.** By LOUISA M. ALCOTT. Double vol., 2*s.*; cloth, 3*s.* 6*d.*
7. **The Mistress of the Manse.** By J. G. HOLLAND.
8. **Timothy Titcomb's Letters to Young People, Single and Married.**
9. **Undine, and the Two Captains.** By Baron DE LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ. A New Translation by F. E. BUNNETT. Illustrated.
10. **Draxy Miller's Dowry, and the Elder's Wife.** By SAXE HOLM.
11. **The Four Gold Pieces.** By Madame GOURAUD. Numerous Illustrations.
12. **Work.** A Story of Experience. First Portion. By LOUISA M. ALCOTT.
13. **Beginning Again.** Being a Continuation of "Work." By LOUISA M. ALCOTT.
14. **Picciola; or, the Prison Flower.** By X. B. SAINTINE. Numerous Graphic Illustrations.
15. **Robert's Holidays.** Illustrated.
16. **The Two Children of St. Domingo.** Numerous Illustrations.
17. **Aunt Jo's Scrap Bag.**
18. **Stowe (Mrs. H. B.) The Pearl of Orr's Island.**
19. ——— **The Minister's Wooing.**
20. ——— **Betty's Bright Idea.**
21. ——— **The Ghost in the Mill.**
22. ——— **Captain Kidd's Money.**
23. ——— **We and our Neighbours.** Double vol., 2*s.* Post 8vo, cloth, 3*s.* 6*d.*
24. ——— **My Wife and I.** Double vol., 2*s.* Post 8vo, cloth, 3*s.* 6*d.*
25. **Hans Brinker; or, the Silver Skates.**

Rose Library (The), continued:—

26. **Lowell's My Study Window.**
27. **Holmes (O. W.) The Guardian Angel.**
28. **Warner (C. D.) My Summer in a Garden.**
29. **Hitherto.** By the Author of "The Gayworthys." 2 vols., 1*s.* each.
30. ***Helen's Babies.** By their Latest Victim.
31. ***The Barton Experiment.** By the Author of "Helen's Babies."

* *Notice.*—The only editions of this author's works published in this country with his sanction, and in the profit of which he participates.

Russell (W. H., LL.D.) The Tour of the Prince of Wales in India, and his Visits to the Courts of Greece, Egypt, Spain, and Portugal. By W. H. RUSSELL, LL.D., who accompanied the Prince throughout his journey; and fully Illustrated by SYDNEY P. HALL, M.A., the Prince's Private Artist, with His Royal Highness's special permission to use the Sketches made during the Tour. Super-royal 8vo, cloth extra, gilt edges, 52*s.* 6*d.*; Large Paper Edition, 84*s.*

SCHWEINFURTH (Dr. G.) The Heart of Africa; or, Three Years' Travels and Adventures in the Unexplored Regions of the Centre of Africa. By Dr. GEORG SCHWEINFURTH. Translated by ELLEN E. FREWER. 2 vols., 8vo, with 130 Woodcuts from Drawings made by the Author, and 2 Maps, 42*s.* 2nd Edition.

——— *Artes Africanæ.* Illustrations and Descriptions of Productions of the Natural Arts of Central African Tribes. With 26 Lithographed Plates, imperial 4to, boards, 28*s.*

Sea-Gull Rock. By JULES SANDEAU, of the French Academy. Translated by ROBERT BLACK, M.A. With 79 very beautiful Woodcuts. Royal 16mo, cloth extra, gilt edges, 7*s.* 6*d.* Cheaper Edition, cloth gilt, 2*s.* 6*d.* *See also* Rose Library.

"It deserves to please the new nation of boys to whom it is presented."—*Times.*

Seonee: Sporting in the Satpura Range of Central India, and in the Valley of the Nerbudda. By R. A. STERNDALE, F.R.G.S. 8vo, with numerous Illustrations. 21*s.*

Shakespeare from an American Point of View; including an Inquiry as to his Religious Faith and his Knowledge of Law; with the Baconian Theory considered. By GEORGE WILKES. Demy 8vo, cloth extra, 16*s.*

Shooting: its Appliances, Practice, and Purpose. By JAMES DALZIEL DOUGALL, F.S.A., F.Z.A. Author of "Scottish Field Sports," &c. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, 10*s.* 6*d.*

"The book is admirable in every way. . . . . We wish it every success."—*Globe.*

"A very complete treatise. . . . . Likely to take high rank as an authority on shooting."—*Daily News.*

Silent Hour (The). *See* GENTLE LIFE SERIES.

Silver Pitchers. *See* ALCOTT.

Sketches from an Artist's Portfolio. By SYDNEY P. HALL. About 60 Facsimiles of his Sketches during Travels in various parts of Europe. Folio, cloth extra, 3*l.* 3*s.*

"A portfolio which any one might be glad to call their own."—*Times.*

Sketches of Life and Scenery in Australia. By a Twenty-five Years' Resident. 1 vol., demy 8vo, cloth extra, 14*s.*

Sleepy Sketches; or, How we Live, and How we Do Not Live. From Bombay. 1 vol., small post 8vo, cloth, 6*s.*
"Well-written and amusing sketches of Indian society."—*Morning Post.*

Smith (*G.*) *Assyrian Explorations and Discoveries.* By the late GEORGE SMITH. Illustrated by Photographs and Woodcuts. Demy 8vo, 18*s.* 6th Edition.

——— *The Chaldean Account of Genesis.* Containing the Description of the Creation, the Fall of Man, the Deluge, the Tower of Babel, the Times of the Patriarchs, and Nimrod; Babylonian Fables, and Legends of the Gods; from the Cuneiform Inscriptions. By the late G. SMITH, of the Department of Oriental Antiquities, British Museum. Author of "History of Assurbanipal," "Assyrian Discoveries," &c., &c. With many Illustrations. Demy 8vo, cloth extra, 16*s.* 5th Edition.

Snow-Shoes and Canoes; or, the Adventures of a Fur-Hunter in the Hudson's Bay Territory. By W. H. G. KINGSTON. 2nd Edition. With numerous Illustrations. Square crown 8vo, cloth extra, gilt, 7*s.* 6*d.*

Spain. Illustrated by GUSTAVE DORÉ. Text by the BARON CH. D'AVILLIER. Containing over 240 Wood Engravings by Doré, half of them being Full-page size. Imperial 4to, elaborately bound in cloth, extra gilt edges, 3*l.* 3*s.*

Stanley (*H. M.*) *How I Found Livingstone.* Crown 8vo, cloth extra, 7*s.* 6*d.* Demy 8vo, 10*s.* 6*d.*

——— "*My Kalulu*," *Prince, King, and Slave.* A Story from Central Africa. Crown 8vo, about 430 pp., with numerous graphic Illustrations, after Original Designs by the Author. Cloth, 7*s.* 6*d.*

——— *Coomassie and Magdala.* A Story of Two British Campaigns in Africa. Demy 8vo, with Maps and Illustrations, 16*s.* 2nd Edition.

Sterndale (*R. A.*) *See* Seonee.

Storey's (*Justice*) *Works.* *See* Low's American Catalogue.

Story without an End. From the German of Carové, by the late Mrs. SARAH T. AUSTIN. Crown 4to, with 15 Exquisite Drawings by E. V. B., printed in Colours in Facsimile of the original Water Colours; and numerous other Illustrations. New Edition, 7*s.* 6*d.*

——— square 4to, with Illustrations by HARVEY. 2*s.* 6*d.*

Stowe (*Mrs. Beecher*) *Dred.* Tauchnitz Edition. 12mo, 3*s.* 6*d.*, also in boards, 1*s.*

——— *Footsteps of the Master.* With Illustrations and red borders. Small post 8vo, cloth extra, 6*s.*

——— *Betty's Bright Idea.*

Stowe (Mrs. Beecher) My Wife and I; or, Harry Henderson's History. Small post 8vo, cloth extra, 6*s.**

——— *Minister's Wooing*, 5*s.*; Copyright Series, 1*s.* 6*d.*; cl., 2*s.**

——— *Old Town Folk.* 6*s.*; Cheap Edition, 2*s.* 6*d.*

——— *Old Town Fireside Stories.* Cloth extra, 3*s.* 6*d.*

——— *We and Our Neighbours.* 1 vol., small post 8vo, 6*s.* Sequel to "My Wife and I." *

——— *Pink and White Tyranny*, Small post 8vo, 3*s.* 6*d.*; Cheap Edition, 1*s.* 6*d.* and 2*s.*

——— *Queer Little People.* 1*s.*; cloth 2*s.*

——— *Chimney Corner.* 1*s.*; cloth, 1*s.* 6*d.*

——— *The Pearl of Orr's Island.* Crown 8vo, 5*s.**

——— *Little Pussey Willow.* Fcap., 2*s.*

——— *Woman in Sacred History.* Illustrated with 15 Chromo-lithographs and about 200 pages of Letterpress. Demy 4to, cloth extra, gilt edges, 25*s.*

* *See also* Rose Library.

Street Life in London. By J. THOMSON, F.R.G.S., and ADOLPHE SMITH. Each Monthly Part, 4to size, in Wrapper, price 1*s.* 6*d.*, contains Three permanent Photographs, taken from Life expressly for this Periodical.

*** The object of the Work is to present to the reader some account of the present condition of London Street Folk, and to supply a series of faithful pictures of the people themselves.

TAUCHNITZ'S English Editions of German Authors. Each volume, cloth flexible, 2*s.*; or sewed, 1*s.* 6*d.* Catalogues post free on application.

Tauchnitz (B.) German and English Dictionary. Paper, 1*s.*; cloth, 1*s.* 6*d.*; roan, 2*s.*

——— *French and English.* Paper, 1*s.* 6*d.*; cloth, 2*s*; roan, 2*s.* 6*d.*

——— *Italian and English.* Paper, 1*s.* 6*d.*; cloth, 2*s.*; roan, 2*s.* 6*d.*

——— *Spanish and English.* Paper, 1*s.* 6*d.*; cloth, 2*s.*; roan, 2*s.* 6*d.*

——— *New Testament.* Cloth, 2*s.*; gilt, 2*s.* 6*d.*

Textbook (A) of Harmony. For the Use of Schools and Students. By the late CHARLES EDWARD HORSLEY. Revised for the Press by WESTLEY RICHARDS and W. H. CALCOTT. Small post 8vo, cloth extra, 3*s.* 6*d.*

Thebes, and its Five Greater Temples. *See* ABNEY.

Thomson (J.) The Straits of Malacca, Indo-China, and China; or, Ten Years' Travels, Adventures, and Residence Abroad. By J. THOMSON, F.R.G.S., Author of "Illustrations of China and its People." Upwards of 60 Woodcuts, from the Author's own Photographs and Sketches. Demy 8vo, cloth extra, 21*s.*

Thorne (*E.*) *The Queen of the Colonies; or, Queensland as I* saw it. 1 vol., with Map, 6*s.*

Tissandier (*Gaston*) *A History and Handbook of Photography.* Translated from the French of GASTON TISSANDIER; edited by J. THOMPSON, F.R.G.S. Imperial 16mo, over 300 pages, and 75 Wood Engravings and a Frontispiece, cloth extra, 6*s.*

"This work should find a place on the shelves of every photographer's library."—*The British Journal of Photography.*

"This capital handbook will tend to raise photography once more to its true position as a science, and to a high place among the fine arts."—*The Spectator.*

Tour of the Prince of Wales in India. *See* RUSSELL.

Trollope (*A.*) *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil.* A Story of Bush Life in Australia. With graphic Illustrations. In 1 vol., small post, cloth extra, 5*s.* 2nd Edition.

Turkistan. Notes of a Journey in the Russian Provinces of Central Asia and the Khanates of Bokhara and Kokand. By EUGENE SCHUYLER, Secretary to the American Legation, St. Petersburg. Numerous Illustrations. 2 vols, demy 8vo, cl. extra, 2*l.* 2*s.* 5th Edition.

Two Americas; being an Account of Sport and Travel. With Notes of Men and Manners in North and South America. By Sir ROSE PRICE, Bart. 1 vol., demy 8vo, with Illustrations, cloth extra, 18*s.* 2nd Edition.

"We have seldom come across a book which has given us so much pleasure."—*Land and Water.*

VERNE'S (*Jules*) *Works.* Translated from the French, with from 50 to 100 Illustrations. Each cloth extra, gilt edges.

Large post 8vo, price 10s. 6d. each.

1. **Fur Country.**
2. **Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea.**
3. **From the Earth to the Moon, and a Trip round It.**
4. **Michael Strogoff, the Courier of the Czar.**
5. **Hector Servadac.** [*In the press.*

Imperial 16mo, price 7s. 6d. each.

1. **Five Weeks in a Balloon.**
2. **Adventures of Three Englishmen and Three Russians in South Africa.**
3. **Around the World in Eighty Days.**
4. **A Floating City, and the Blockade Runners.**
5. **Dr. Ox's Experiment, Master Zacharius, A Drama in the Air, A Winter amid the Ice, &c.**
6. **The Survivors of the "Chancellor."**
7. **Dropped from the Clouds.**
8. **Abandoned.**
9. **Secret of the Island.**

} **The Mysterious Island.** 3 vols 22*s.* 6*d.*

The following Cheaper Editions are issued with a few of the Illustrations, in handsome paper wrapper, price 1*s.*; *cloth, gilt,* 2*s. each.*

1. **Adventures of Three Englishmen and Three Russians in South Africa.**
2. **Five Weeks in a Balloon.**
3. **A Floating City.**
4. **The Blockade Runners.**
5. **From the Earth to the Moon.**
6. **Around the Moon.**
7. **Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea.** Vol. I.
8. ——— Vol. II. The two parts in one, cloth, gilt, 3*s.* 6*d.*
9. **Around the World in Eighty Days.**
10. **Dr. Ox's Experiment, and Master Zacharius.**
11. **Martin Paz, the Indian Patriot.**
12. **A Winter amid the Ice.**

The public must kindly be careful to order LOW'S AUTHOR'S EDITIONS.

Visit to Japan, China, and India. By R. N. FOWLER, M.A., F.R.G.S. 1 vol., crown 8vo, 10*s.* 6*d.*

WALLER (Rev. C. H.) The Names on the Gates of Pearl, and other Studies. By the Rev. C. H. WALLER, M.A. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, 6*s.*

——— *A Grammar and Analytical Vocabulary of the Words in* the Greek Testament. Compiled from Brüder's Concordance. For the use of Divinity Students and Greek Testament Classes. By the Rev. C. H. WALLER, M.A., late Scholar of University College, Oxford. Tutor of the London College of Divinity, St. John's Hall, Highbury. Part I., The Grammar. Small post 8vo, cloth, 2*s.* 6*d.*

Warburton's (Col. Egerton) Journey across Australia. An Account of the Exploring Expedition sent out under the command of Colonel E. Warburton. With Illustrations and a Map. Edited, with an Introductory Chapter, by H. W. BATES, Esq., F.R.G.S. Demy 8vo, cloth, 16*s.*

Warner (C. D.) My Summer in a Garden. Boards, 1*s.* 6*d.*; cloth, 2*s.* (Low's Copyright Series.)

——— *Back-log Studies.* Boards, 1*s.* 6*d.*; cloth, 2*s.* (Low's Copyright Series).

——— *Mummies and Moslems.* 8vo, cloth, 12*s.*

Weppner (M.) The Northern Star and Southern Cross. Being the Personal Experiences, Impressions, and Observations of M. Weppner, in a Voyage round the World. 2 vols., cr. 8vo, cloth, 24*s.*

Werner (Carl) Nile Sketches, Painted from Nature during his Travels through Egypt. Imperial Folio, in Cardboard Wrapper. Complete in 5 Parts. The 4 first at 3*l.* 10*s.* each; Part V., 2*l.* 5*s.*

Westropp (*H. M.*) *A Manual of Precious Stones and Antique* Gems. By HODDER M. WESTROPP, Author of "The Traveller's Art Companion," "Pre-Historic Phases," &c. Numerous Illustrations. Small post 8vo, cloth extra, 6*s*.

White (*J.*) *Te Rou; or, the Maori at Home.* Exhibiting the Social Life, Manners, Habits, and Customs of the Maori Race in New Zealand prior to the Introduction of Civilization amongst them. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, 10*s*. 6*d*.

Whitney (*Mrs. A. D. T.*) *The Gayworthys.* Small post 8vo, 3*s*. 6*d*.

——— *Faith Gartney.* Small post 8vo, 3*s*. 6*d*. And in Low's Cheap Series, 1*s*. 6*d*. and 2*s*.

Whitney (*Mrs. A. T. D.*) *Real Folks.* 12mo, crown, 3*s*. 6*d*.

——— *Hitherto.* Small post 8vo, 3*s*. 6*d*. *and* 2*s*. 6*d*.

——— *Sights and Insights.* 3 vols., crown 8vo, 31*s*. 6*d*.

——— *Summer in Leslie Goldthwaite's Life.* Small post 8vo, 3*s*. 6*d*.

——— *The Other Girls.* Small post 8vo, cloth extra, 3*s*. 6*d*.

——— *We Girls.* Small post 8vo, 3*s*. 6*d*.; Cheap Edition, 1*s*. 6*d*. and 2*s*.

Woolsey (*C. D., LL.D.*) *Introduction to the Study of International* Law; designed as an Aid in Teaching and in Historical Studies. Reprinted from the last American Edition, and at a much lower price. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, 8*s*. 6*d*.

Worcester's (*Dr.*) *New and Greatly Enlarged Dictionary of the* English Language. Adapted for Library or College Reference, comprising 40,000 Words more than Johnson's Dictionary. 4to, cloth, 1834 pp., price 31*s*. 6*d*. well bound; ditto, half-morocco, 2*l*. 2*s*.

"The volume before us shows a vast amount of diligence; but with Webster it is diligence in combination with fancifulness,—with Worcester in combination with good sense and judgment. Worcester's is the soberer and safer book, and may be pronounced the best existing English Lexicon."—*Athenæum*.

World of Comets. By A. GUILLEMIN, Author of "The Heavens." Translated and edited by JAMES GLAISHER, F.R.S. 1 vol., super-royal 8vo, with numerous Woodcut Illustrations, and 3 Chromo-lithographs, cloth extra, 31*s*. 6*d*.

XENOPHON'S Anabasis; or, Expedition of Cyrus. A Literal Translation, chiefly from the Text of Dindorff, by GEORGE B. WHEELER. Books I to III. Crown 8vo, boards, 2*s*.

——— *Books I. to VII.* Boards, 3*s*. 6*d*.

London:

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON,

CROWN BUILDINGS, 188, FLEET STREET.

/ 6